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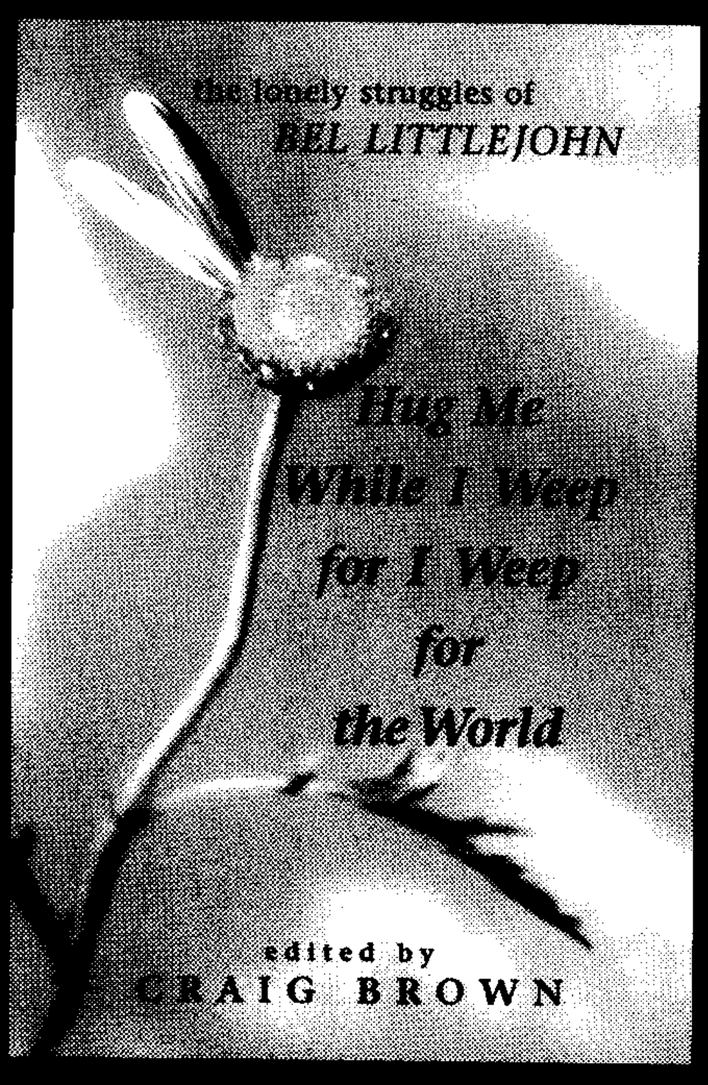

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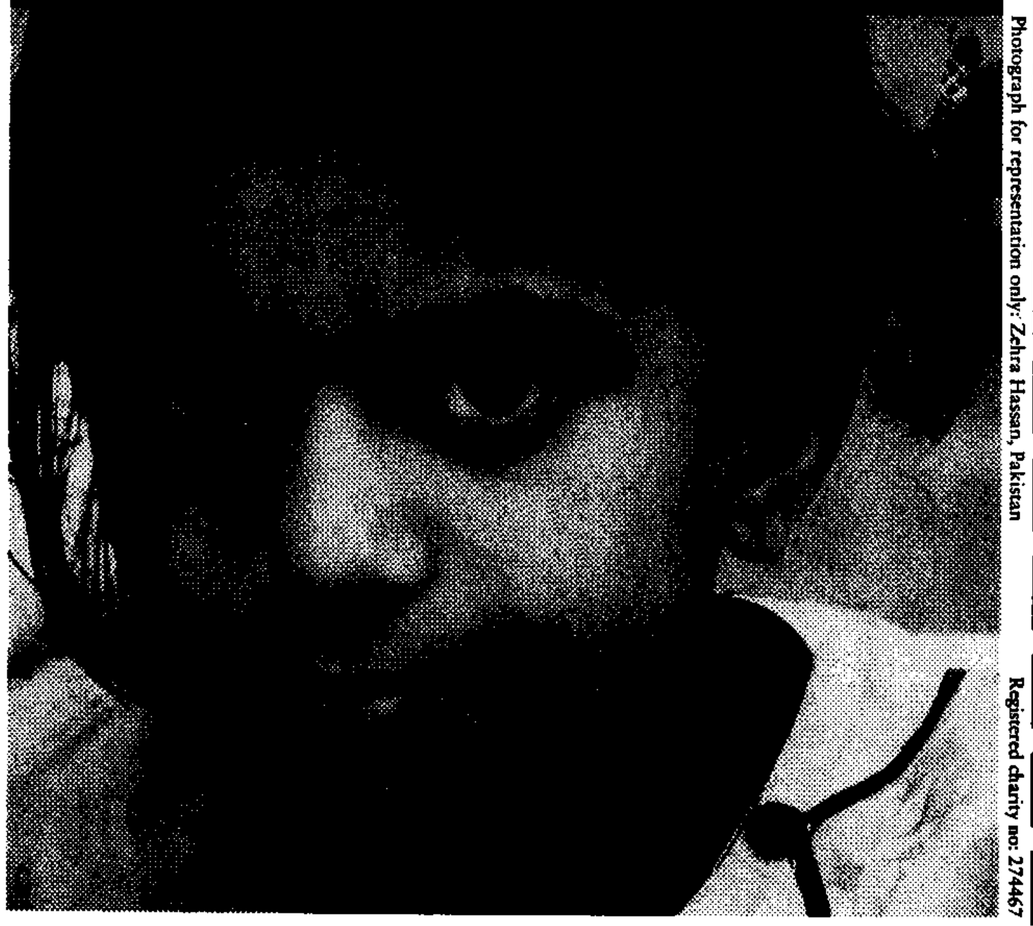

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ACTIONAID

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT.

Today is the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Well, happy bloody birthday, human rights.

We'd love to celebrate the fine words set forth by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948.

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM AND RESIDENCE WITHIN THE BORDERS OF EACH STATE.

But they are words that could have been written a million times over in the blood of those who have been murdered, massacred and mutilated in the last 50 years.

If you're eating your breakfast while you read this, digest the following:

Last year, thousands of extrajudicial executions were carried out in at least 69 countries.

Last year, thousands of prisoners of conscience were held in at least 94 countries.

Last year, thousands of people were "disappeared" in at least 39 countries.

Last year, tens of thousands of people were tortured in at least 124 countries.

Last year, tens of thousands of people were held without charge or trial in at least 78 countries.

Repetitive, isn't it. There's more.

13 million people are refugees.

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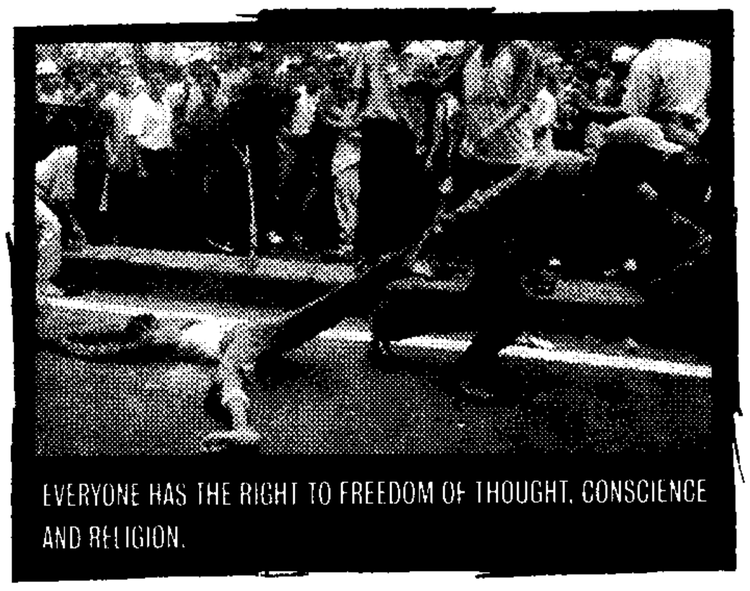
300,000 children under the age of 18 – some



EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION.

as young as 7 years old – are being made to fight as child soldiers in 25 countries.

We say "people" and "children". Impersonal words, those.

These are real flesh-and-blood human beings like you.

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Some of them are human rights activists who are prepared to fight for their rights, maybe even to die for them.

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If you join Amnesty, or send us a donation, you will not be arrested and thrown in jail.

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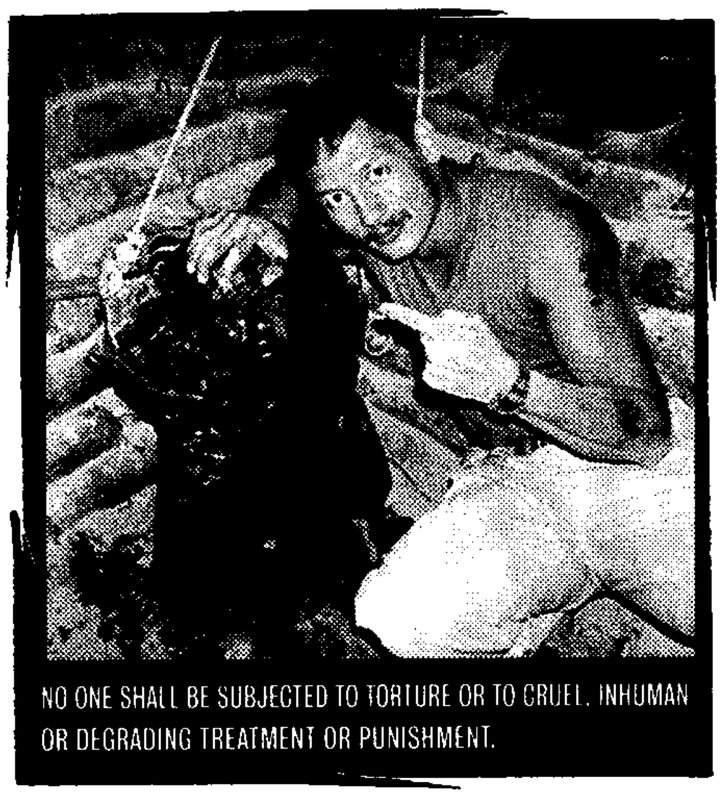
You are a free human being. It is your fundamental right to support us if you choose to.

Just as it is your right to ignore us, and turn the page.



NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED TO TORTURE OR TO CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT.

EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO A FAIR AND PUBLIC HEARING BY AN INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL TRIBUNAL.

After all, why should you join Amnesty? Why should you send us money?

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At Amnesty International, we refuse to remain indifferent to the suffering of our fellow human beings.

For us, and our one million members and supporters around the world, the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are a constant inspiration.

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Gnome

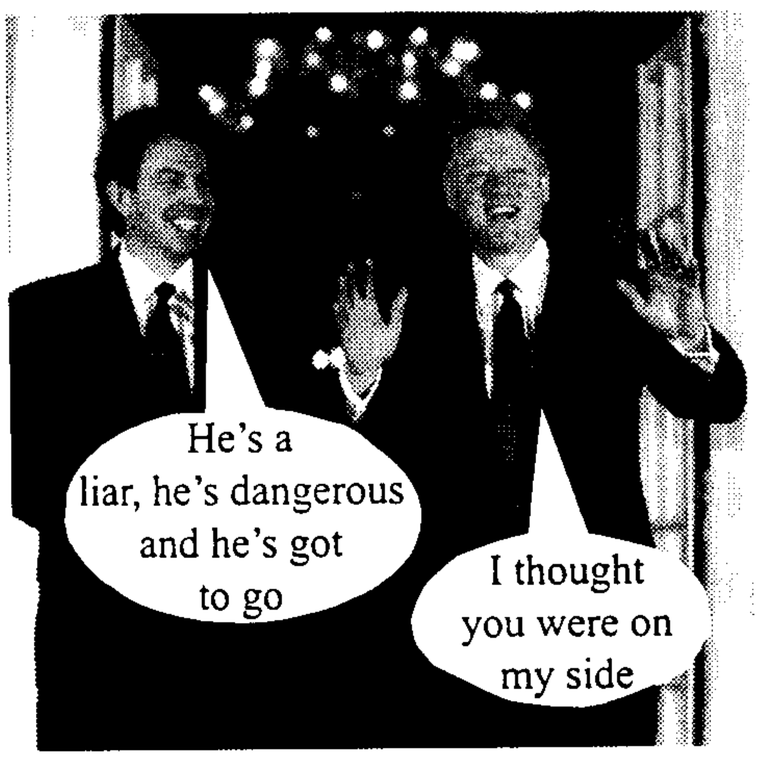
I AM appalled by recent suggestions in the media that one of my editors is in the pocket of MI6 and is employed by them to run propaganda for their interests in the pages of the newspaper.

As anyone involved in journalism knows, my editors are in my pocket and are employed by *me* to run propaganda for *my* interests.

I hope that is an end to the subject.

E. Strobes
pp. Lord Gnome
c/o The Gnomes and
Sunday Gnomegraph
Wapping
London EC 007

SADDAM SHOCK



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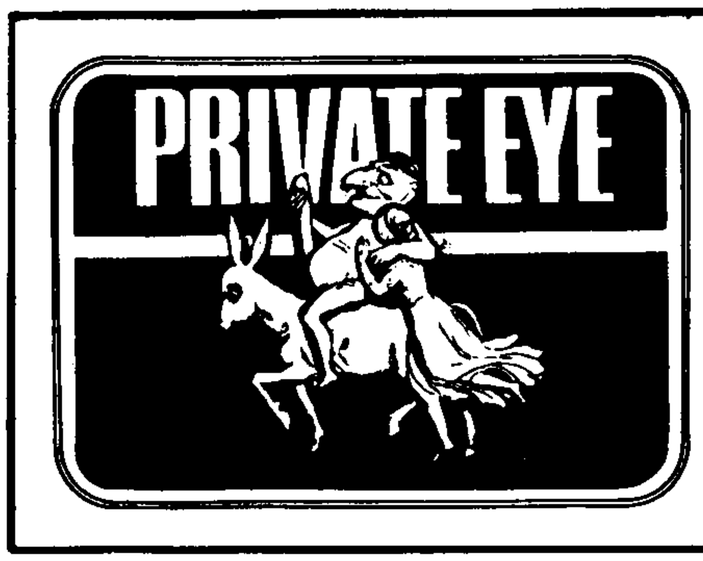


COLOUR SECTION

RICHARD TOMLINSON, the former MI6 agent, has named not one but *two* national newspaper editors connected to MI6 as "assets".

To some journalists he named Dominic Lawson, editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*; to others, including at least one former security service agent, he named Peter Stothard, editor of the *Times*. Both editors have flatly denied any connection with any section of the British intelligence services.

Perhaps relieved that Labour MP Brian Sedgemore and most of the rest of the press have taken up the allegations against Dominic Lawson, the *Times* has indulged the story enormously, dwelling at length for instance on the huge amounts of money spent by Lawson, a working journalist without any apparent access to vast wealth, on his various homes.

Other allegations from Tomlinson set out the details of payments made to the editor for his services to MI6: namely a £100,000 retainer in the early 1990s up to at least 1995 through a section of what MI6 calls "Department I Ops", (department of information operations) which specialises in black propaganda and in briefing friendly defence correspondents. The money was allegedly paid through an offshore bank account set up in a false name, and is quite impossible to trace.

As usual the foreign office has reacted to the allegations by going way over the top. After saying it doesn't comment on intelligence matters, it proceeded to comment on intelligence matters. "We can point out very forcefully that SIS (MI6) would never have an agent who was an editor of a British newspaper."

Never? What about Kim Philby, who retired from his senior intelligence post to work for the *Economist* and the *Observer*? What about innumerable other journalists who have been paid in stories or in cash for helping out the security services? One answer may be in the use of the word "agent" in the FO statement. A journalist paid to provide information or even to "keep your eyes open" would be known as an "asset" or an "assistant" or just "on side".

The fact that the intelligence services recruit journalists for such "assistance" has been well known at least since December 1994 when the *Eye* first published the experiences of Jon Snow when he first joined ITN in January 1976. Snow was secretly summoned to Room 055 in the ministry of defence where he was asked to help the security services with information about his work and his colleagues. In exchange, he was told, he would be paid a sum equivalent to his entire salary, which would be deposited monthly in a secret bank account so that he would not have to pay tax. Snow declined, and ever since has maintained a healthy scepticism about those of his colleagues who slavishly follow the ministry of defence line.

IF the worst comes to the worst and Jonathan Aitken is found guilty when he goes on trial at the Old Bailey next year on charges of perjury and perverting the course of justice, the former minister is optimistic he will not get a long prison sentence, the *Eye* can reveal.

Eighteen months, top whack, he confidently tells friends. Less optimistic, however, is his brief John Nutting QC. Were Aitken to be convicted, he predicts to colleagues that the former chief secretary to the treasury could go down for three years.

Nutting and Aitken go way back. Both were at Eton together and were 14 at the time of the Suez crisis in October 1956. Nutting's father, Sir Anthony Nutting, himself an old Etonian, was Tory MP for Melton Mowbray and a foreign office minister in the Eden government. He caused a sensation by resigning as a minister and as an MP over Suez.

For Sir Anthony to obey his conscience in such a manner was considered terrifically bad form, unpatriotic, un-Tory and, most of all, un-Etonian by staff and boys at his old school. Fortunately Nutting junior was on hand and was made to suffer by a gang of boys who "ragged" (bullied) him cruelly because of his father's action. No prizes for guessing who the leader of the gang was.

Aitken, bless him, claims he cannot remember the incident. Nutting certainly can. But he obviously bears no malice or he wouldn't be defending his old classmate.

WHY the delay in the criminal cases review commission (CCRC) announcement that the case of James Hanratty, who was hanged in 1962 for the A6 murder, is to go to the court of appeal?

Apparently the CCRC's press release which will set out in some detail the main reasons for the referral is taking longer than predicted. One reputation which will be severely damaged by the release will be that of the Scotland Yard detective sergeant who conducted many of the initial inquiries and took notes of the police interviews with Hanratty.

Poor Kenneth Oxford is knocked all over the place in a statement which would have caused the authorities much embarrassment. Oxford went on to be chief constable of Merseyside, with the inevitable knighthood. But he will not now be around to face the music. He died last month. The obituaries were effusive.

A POWERFUL point in Bill Clinton's address to the American people on the bombing of Iraq was that Saddam Hussein had actually used his weapons of mass destruction "against Iran". This is perfectly true. It's also true that Hussein's most enthusiastic supporter for those attacks on Iran was the US government.

Though the official policy of the US state department to the Iran-Iraq war (1980—1988) was neutrality, the full force of Ronald Reagan's secret state was directed against Iran and in favour of Iraq. Oliver North, who ran the covert operations for the White House, revealed much later: "Our government was quietly siding with Iraq."

EYE-SKY-B52S

The BBC ignored the outbreak of war — to run a REPEAT of *One Foot In The Grave*. As missiles rained down on Baghdad it decided it wasn't worth interrupting the Victor Meldrew comedy to tell viewers the nation was at war... Sky News delivered round-the-clock coverage...

The Sun, 17 December

"Bloody Christmas — nothing but repeats!"

Street of Shame

THE *News of the World* had a good tearjerker up its sleeve for Christmas that combined several sure-fire tabloid ingredients — little children in need of help, a telly soap star, and putting itself in a good light.

The paper planned to fly *Coronation Street* actress Tracy Shaw ("sexy crimper Maxine Heavey") to Russia to distribute Red Cross parcels to children living in orphanages (who are all, no doubt, keen fans of t'Street). Tracy and the Red Cross would get some free publicity, one of the world's most hard-hearted newspapers would be able to present itself as kind to little mites, and a few bewildered kids would have their miserable lives temporarily lightened.

Alas, before plans for the trip were complete the *Screws* got wind of a "story" about Tracy's publican father, Karl: to wit, that he had had a 14-year extra-marital affair with a woman who had borne him a child. When Tracy Shaw learned that the *Screws* was working on this tale she told the rag that she would pull out of the Russian trip if they went ahead with it.

What was it to be: hungry children or a few column inches of smut on page 15? The *Screws* hesitated for a good five minutes before letting its natural instincts win. "Tracy's Secret Sister" duly appeared on 6 December, with a nice follow-up on the 13th to complete the Shaw family's happiness at Christmas: "TV Tracy parents in split". The Russian orphans, meanwhile, were quietly forgotten.

NEIL WALLIS, editor of the *Sunday People*, has had another great exclusive: ANTHEA IS PREGNANT, screamed the splash headline on the second edition of 6 December, above the intro: "TV star Anthea Turner is pregnant with lover Grant Bovey's baby, the *Sunday People* can reveal. Anthea, 38, is overjoyed at the prospect of becomimg a mum..."

Er, but shurely, the attentive tabloid reader will observe, the *People*'s splash that day was "Mr Mensa Beds Mrs Viagra", a complicated yarn about two people no one has ever heard of, one of whom happens to be a director of the clever clogs' society and the other, er, the wife of a pharmaceutical company salesman.

Quite right! The "Mrs Viagra" story was originally intended as a first edition red herring to put the *People*'s rivals off the scent of the great Anthea exclusive, which duly began to roll off the Watford presses after the first edition had gone. Some 250,000 copies had been printed before Wallis realised there was one small problem with the story — ie, it wasn't true. All quarter of a million copies and their expensive colour Christmas TV guide inserts had to be sent to the shredder while Mrs Viagra was reinstated to Page One glory.

Hence the *Christmas Cracker* riddle now doing the rounds. **Q:** Why is Neil Wallis's nickname "Tarantino"? **A:** Because his paper is fiction and it gets pulped!

FORMER *People* editor Bill Hagerty did well to get the long interview with Mirror Group boss David "Rommel" Montgomery which appeared in Media *Grauniad* last week, because there has never been any love lost between the two men.

In Hagerty's piece he notes in passing that Rommel "fired me from the editorship of the *People* in 1992". He is too modest. When Montgomery set about sacking scores of Mirror Group hacks in late 1992, Bill Hagerty's name was at the top of the list and he was the first out of the door.

By an amazing coincidence Hagerty had himself sacked Montgomery's then wife Heidi Kingstone as a *People* feature writer some months earlier for being useless and spending too much time in the powder room. Heidi vowed revenge — and duly got it. How nice it is to see old adversaries making up!

EACH week *Express* editor Rosie Boycott pens a letter to readers telling them how their newspaper is getting on.

A recent Boycott offering chose a worthy topic: "While writers have by-lines, the paper has its unsung backroom heroes and heroines, like Nicki Briggs, Sean Rayment and Jackie Goddard who man the home and foreign news desks".

This handsome gesture followed a meeting between Boycott and the threesome, all old *Express* hands from pre-Rosie days, in which they had demanded to know how secure their jobs were at the ever-turbulent paper. Rosie reassured them of their importance to the paper's success. But her upbeat letter didn't raise their spirits. Why? Because it managed to misspell two of the backroom heroines' names.

JUST FANCY THAT!

General Pinochet should sleep easy in his bed... The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, will make sure that he is back home in Chile for Christmas. This is because the decision about whether to accede to Spanish demands for Pinochet's extradition has now finally become political. And politically the only option for New Labour is to send him home.

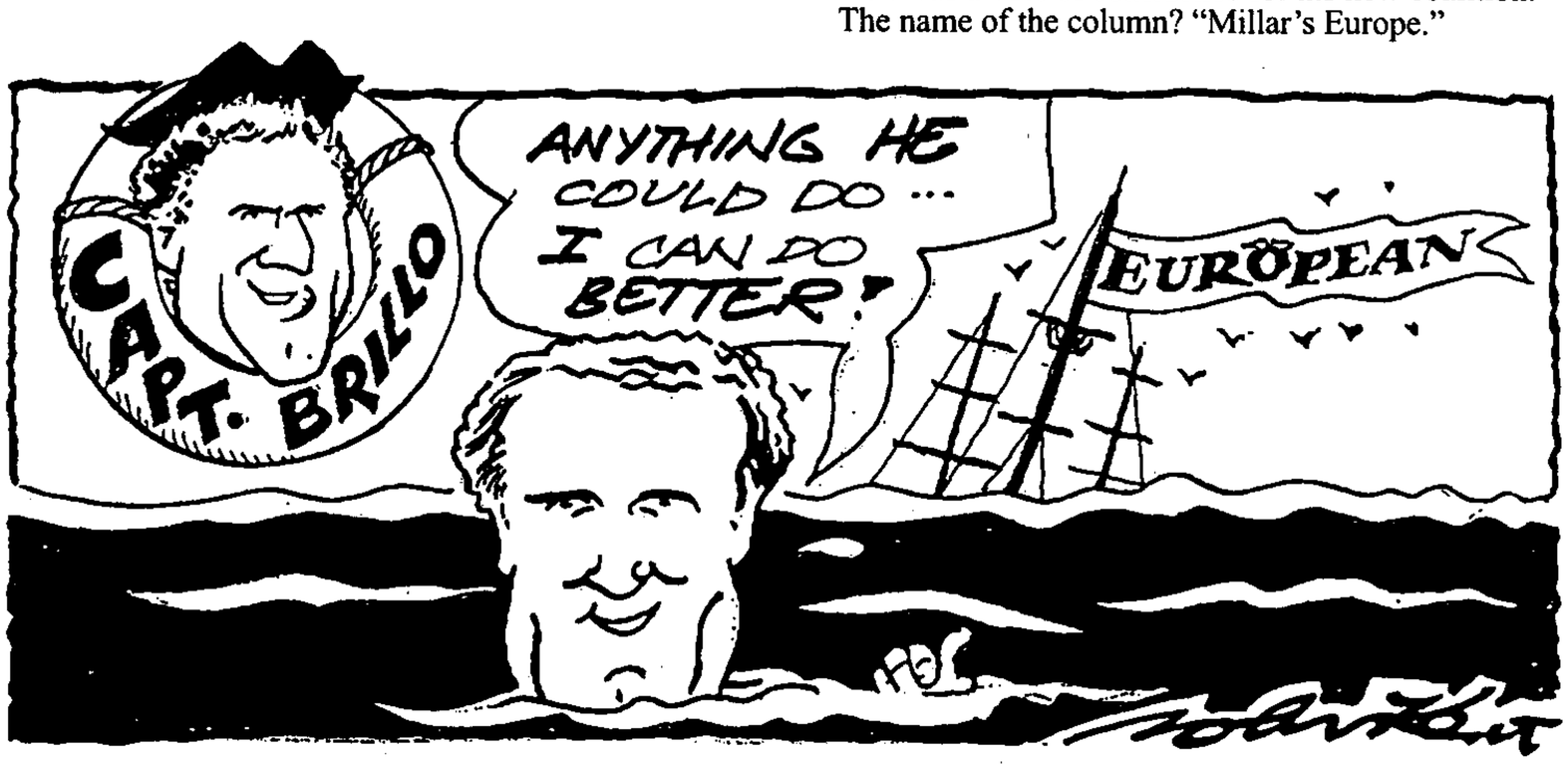
— Sion Simon, *Daily Telegraph*, 30 November.

Jack Straw would no more extradite General Pinochet to Spain than he would lie about his age — 52 — in order to be the oldest swinger on a Club 18-30 holiday... There will barely ever have been a doubt in his mind that, one way or another, the old dictator would have to be sent home."

— Sion Simon, *Independent on Sunday*, 6 December.

SO FAREWELL then, the *European* — which outlived its founder, Cap'n Bob, but couldn't survive the editorial caresses of Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill.

Peter Millar, who was associated with the paper since its launch, writes in the *Guardian* of his "sadness" at the demise. The rag's history, he reveals, is a tragic saga of mishaps and incompetent hacks. Here's an example. A columnist writing in the *European* of 12 July 1997 offered congratulations to Turkish prime minister Mesut Yilmaz on winning the general election — unaware that the election had in fact taken place more than 18 months earlier in December 1995, and that what Yilmaz had actually won was a vote of confidence for his new coalition. The name of the column? "Millar's Europe."



MI5 whistleblower David Shayler has become highly suspicious of certain journalists — and not just because of the revelation that some of them are on the spooks' payroll.

One hack who previously expressed sympathy for his cause was Charles Masters, a Paris stringer for the *Sunday Telegraph* and *Sunday Times*.

On Shayler's dramatic release from jail, Masters was effusive in his congratulations and said he was a great admirer. He told the former MI5 officer's friends that he supported his actions and was in "tremendous sympathy" for his campaign against the security services.

But as soon as he failed to secure an interview, Masters changed his tune. "Why Did MI5 Ever Take David Shayler Seriously?" was the banner headline to Masters' feature in the *Telegraph* which dripped with vitriol and malice. He claimed Shayler was only motivated by money and was prepared to share his latest "revelations" "only if the price was right".

At the time of his release Masters said privately he was a hero. Three days later he wrote that Shayler was "bizarre", greedy, "untrustworthy" with a "hazy memory". Good to know the *Telegraph* is as consistent as ever.

FLEET STREET environment correspondents — normally a sober, sandal-wearing bunch — have become so heated with one another there are fears of a renewed bout of global warming.

Following the spat between Charles "Dogshit" Clover of the *Daily Telegraph* and John Prescott's political adviser Joan Hammill at the hacks' Christmas party (during which Clover accused Prescott and Hammill of treating him like a piece of ordure), the party's organisers, Greg Neale, of the *Sunday Telegraph* and Mike "Bonkers" McCarthy of the *Indescribablysanctimonious*, sent Hammill a bouquet in apology.

McCarthy also delivered a 15-minute lecture to Clover about his behaviour. This further outraged Clover, who saw himself as the injured party having been wrongly accused by Prescott of writing pro-hunting stories in the hope of boosting his application to become chief executive of the Countryside Alliance.

Clover was already feeling hurt because Prescott never responds to letters or calls from the *Telegraph*. He apparently has this strange idea that it is an awful Tory rag with which he should have nothing to do. The *Telegraph* man does have a point. A colleague of the deputy prime minister tells the *Eye*: "Prescott does have this terrible `is he one of us?' attitude. He reminds me very much of Margaret Thatcher."

***SUNDAY Telegraph* political editor Tom Baldwin can look back at the year with pride, particularly his spring exclusive about Tony Blair's flat at No 11 Downing Street possibly breaching listed building status.**

Baldwin's story claimed that officers at Westminster council and English Heritage demanded access to the flat "amid reports" that extensive refurbishments had been carried out.

But where had these "reports" come from? Worried local residents? Er, no. A letter from Westminster council chief executive Bill Roots to a councillor reveals that one "Tom Baldwin... specifically alleged that works had taken place to the Grade I listed building without the necessary consent".

So did the investigation, which arose purely as a result of the journalist's allegations, uncover any breaches of listed building status. Er, no. In fact the area planning officer called the changes "minor stuff". Roots's letter explained that as Baldwin himself was the complainant he "received a full explanation of the outcome of the investigation in accordance with the council's adopted enforcement procedures. I am afraid there is little effective safeguard against mischievous and misleading reporting".

Still, there's no news quite like manufactured news for a Sunday.

IN *Eye* 964 we told how Brian Dunlea, features production editor of the *Daily Star*, was summoned by personnel director Sue Brader to be sacked. Alas, it turned out that she had confused him with another Brian.

So far so true. Unfortunately, we erred in saying that Brian Kelly, the chief features sub-editor, had subsequently been sacked: he is still at the *Star*. Apologies.

WORLD OF SPORT

THE appointment of David Hemery as president of UK Athletics is good news for those who want to clean up the sport but bad for those athletes hoping to enhance their track or field performance with drugs.

Hemery announced it as his mission to eradicate all drugs cheats in the sport and he has devised some exacting and precise tests to achieve his objective.

Meanwhile the lawn tennis community is grouping its wagons in an attempt to limit damage about to be inflicted on its good name by its very own imminent drugs scandal. The sport, whose global income is said to approach £7bn driven by television fees, is, not surprisingly, sensitive to anything that would tarnish its reputation and thus inhibit its earnings. The bad news is that the drug involved is cocaine and the inquiry falls within the jurisdiction of the All England Club.

LONG-SUFFERING Manchester taxpayers were not surprised when Jim Seligman, the man in charge of their 2002 Commonwealth games, quit after only 11 months in the job. But at least Manchester Blackley MP Graham Stringer has assured Mancunians the games will still be a great success.

His assurances have not eased fears among those who recall Stringer's previous attempt to bring fame to the city — Global Forum 94, a half-hearted copy of the Rio Earth summit. No world leader came; few environmentalists bothered; and the city is still an ugly, untidy mess despite efforts to clear up for 2002.

The only corporate contribution to the games so far is a £2m cheque from Manchester airport (55 percent owned by the city and run by Graham Stringer). Sadly this largesse is unlikely to be repeated. Though the airport announced record profits of £33m in June, its dynamic management seems to have hit cashflow problems because of expansion plans, including the unnecessary and controversial second runway.

FOOTBALL supporters in Newcastle are furious at the delay by the police complaints authority (PCA) and Greater Manchester police in investigating an alleged attack on some of their fans by the city's boys in blue.

Eleven Newcastle Utd and Sheffield Utd fans were drinking in the Wetherspoons pub near Manchester Piccadilly railway station after the FA cup semi-final at Old Trafford last April. After claims that glasses were broken, a line of riot police entered the pub. No arrest was made, but 30 officers from the tactical aid unit, wearing helmets and brandishing shields and batons, cleared the pub with zealous efficiency.

The fans who claim they received powerful blows that afternoon include the European operations manager for Merseyside chamber of commerce (injuries consistent with being struck on the back by a baton, according to a police surgeon who examined his wounds), an off-duty RAF corporal and, most unlucky of all for Manchester's Inspector Knacker, a retired Northumbria police inspector who required four stitches to a head wound.

The whole incident is believed to have been caught on the pub's video camera which was whisked away by police immediately for a treatment known as "enhancing". Six months after the incident not one officer had been interviewed. Now the internal disciplinary unit of Greater Manchester police says it has finally got 150 hours of taped evidence from the officers present.

Fans have been told the investigation will include a separate incident in the same pub the night before involving Manchester City and Stockport County fans — dragging the process out for several more months.

Plugged In

Denise Van Outen, the *Big Breakfast* presenter, yesterday began shooting for her first film, called *Tube Tales*. It will be shown on Sky Premier in the spring.

The Times

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

HACKWATCH

A Christmas Carroll

LYNDA LEE-POTTER, the unchallenged Queen of the Glendas since the death of Jean Rook, must look to her laurels. She is in danger of being outshone by Sue Carroll, the chain-smoking, hard-drinking, mascara-loving former features editor of the *Sun*, who was hired by the *Mirror* earlier this year as a "brilliant new columnist". Crazy newspaper, crazy gal...

19 August: Sue Carroll sends an open letter to Hillary Clinton. "Remember just a few months ago, when you were asked about the consequences if your husband had in fact used the Oval Office to have sex with the junior help?" she demands. "At the time, I called you `the most powerful doormat in the world'." Hard to believe that the First Lady has forgotten this important comment. Why, then, is she still standing by her man when he's been a-cheatin' and a-bleatin'? Hillary must leave him at once — "not just for yourself but for women everywhere."

26 August: The Spice Girls — what a waste of spice, geddit?!! "By all accounts their days are punctuated with rows and bitchy backbiting... They've ceased to be real. They're a commodity, a record company deal orchestrated by a bunch of money-grubbing executives." The Spice Girls — don'tcha love 'em!? "They raised two fingers to the manipulating money men and did their own thing. These girls have achieved their wealth and fame through sheer bloody-mindedness, hard work and a bit of luck."

2 September: "I've hesitated before returning to the subject of Glenn Hoddle, but I can't hold my tongue any longer about this appallingly behaved man." But then an awful thought strikes her: "I'm sure what I think and say doesn't matter a jot to Mr Hoddle..." Surely not. Meanwhile, Sue chastises the "mealy-mouthed bunch of killjoys" who try to belittle blondes such as Anthea Turner and Denise Van Outen: it is, she implies, disgraceful to attack women because of their appearance. Elsewhere on today's page, she offers her thoughts on Louise Woodward's glamorous new look: "To my mind, no matter how many exotic makeovers she's given, she'll always look like... Meatloaf."

9 September: Here he is, Glenda's summer sizzler — Richard Branson. "I like him because he's different. Because his enthusiasm for life is so intense you feel like injecting yourself with valium after meeting him." Richard Branson — aren'tcha sick of him?! "He's no oil painting, he's crap at small talk, he's pink (all over apparently, having seen him in his ghastly naked telly advert for his book) and he's the world's most shameless self-publicist."

16 September: Fashion guru Laurel Herman has betrayed womankind by trashing the dress-sense of prominent businesswomen such as Anita Roddick ("doesn't look well finished") and Karren Brady ("the hair needs attention"). Sue finds it "astonishing" that any woman can be so cruel.

30 September: Did you see those supermodels on the telly?! "A collection of leggy airheads prancing around the Paris shows, overpaid, underworked and undernourished (apart from their egos that is)." Still, at least Sue has some sympathy for Will Carling's jilted wife, Ali Cockayne: "Tomorrow is a much brighter day for you than it ever will be for him. That, Ali, is how it will be for you. I promise."

21 October: The BBC has sacked television presenter Richard Bacon and issued an on-screen apology, after he was caught taking cocaine in a nightclub. Sue scolds the stupid boy for his irresponsibility, and asks him to consider "the pain he's caused".

28 October: Who does Prince Charles think he is, throwing a party to celebrate his 50th birthday? "It will be a night to remember, to be sure," Sue sneers. "But we, the peasants, will not be dancing in the streets." And for why? Because he's an unpopular old miseryguts, stoopid!

4 November: More TV presenters are in trouble and Sue executes a perfect Glenda-style U-turn. "If Jamie Theakston's girlfriend whacks him in public that's his business... not a reason for po-faced BBC puritans to carpet him. The same goes for Zoe Ball who inadvertently blurted out the F-word last week on her breakfast show and was warned of her position as a `role model'." Come off it, Mister Media Man!! "Excuse me, but aren't `role models' teachers, parents and people in positions of authority?" Or, er, Richard Bacon?

11 November: Research reveals that fathers as well as mothers suffer from post-natal depression — and Auntie Glenda knows why. It's "the shocking discovery that they can no longer fall into bed, get their leg over and have a damned good kip without waking up a screaming brat". Men!?!

18 November: Hats off to our warm, caring Prince of Wales! "On the threshold of his next half century, Prince Charles has pulled off the most vital coup of his life — getting the nation cheering for him." Isn't it time he started to capitalise on his popularity? Sue thinks so. "So, if you'll pardon me, Sir, here's my blueprint for the future... Lend your support to the euthanasia bill (and make your dad an early candidate)." Geddit?!

25 November: Jerry Hall has been left all alone while Mick Jagger is a-huggin' and a-fuggin' his mistress in Paris. "Was my heart stirred? Did I feel any pain for the neglected wife spurned once again by her callous cheating husband? No, I did not." Having got that off her ample chest, Sue turns to Brigitte Bardot: "Loath as I am to make personal comments without first taking a good look in the mirror, I can't help noticing that the legendary French sex kitten has worn less well than her contemporaries." Miaouw!?!

2 December: "When Nicola Horlick, so-called Superwoman of the City, hit the headlines last year — I'll be honest — I didn't like her." But now Horlick's daughter has died, and "needless to say, I've changed my mind". Needless indeed.

16 December: Sue is "bloody hopping mad" at the senior royals who failed to attend a memorial service for the Duchess of York's mum. "It doesn't just stink, it's the ultimate betrayal, and the Queen deserves to hang her head in shame." And there's worse: while the Queen and her children "gorge themselves on Christmas lunch up at Sandringham", Fergie and her daughters will yet again be "cruelly cast out to spend the festive season in a lowly cottage". Why is the royal family like Christmas dinner? It makes you sick — geddit?!? Meanwhile here's Glenda's own Christmas message to Michael Barrymore: "Get a life, Michael." *Byeeeee!!*

PS: JUST FANCY THAT!

Sir,

I can understand how upset Peter Mandelson must be at being thought to be gay.

The gays I know are witty, amusing, generous, sensitive, warm-hearted, perceptive, humorous, understanding, good-looking and well rounded human beings who are a great pleasure to be with.

These are behaviour patterns that Mr M has struggled manfully to avoid all his life, and with which he has certainly shown absolutely no desire to be associated.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN BASSETT.
London NW3.

Private Eye, 11 December

I'M puzzled as to why Peter Mandelson is annoyed that anyone could think he might be gay.

The gays I know are among the most intelligent, charming, witty, fun-loving, amusing, kind, generous and open-minded people you could hope to meet.

On reflection, I'm not so puzzled after all.

Sue Carroll, Mirror, 16 December

IN THE TEAROOM

TOUGH choices are what Tony Blair promised. And a tough choice is what he's got. Whether to continue his sleazy dalliance with the eurosceptic Murdoch press, or to make an honest woman of the euro? That is the question.

The old plan was to string along the Whore of Wapping until after she'd helped secure the next election, then dump the bitch. But since Oskar Lafontaine blew the gaff on tax harmonisation, Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson have started to worry for the first time whether they'll actually be able to win a referendum on the single currency.

Since Lord Neill has said that standards in public life demand the government has to be neutral on the question during the referendum campaign, the real work of winning over public opinion from tabloid-induced prejudice has to start now while no such rules apply.

That's why Tony has been practising his estuary accent in front of the shaving mirror and asking Alastair Campbell for a supply of demotic words like "headbanger" to fling at the europhobes. The new strategy has three parts: first, brand the eurosceptics as nutters (even though sending out the "men in white coats" didn't get John Major very far); second, line up the rebuttal unit to show how they're always crying wolf (we still have the great British banger, ice-cream still tastes the same, we still enjoy the right to drive on the left-hand side of the road); lastly, accuse the Little Englanders of being very old-fashioned and not at all "modin".

The problem is that there's a convention by which government ministers only mix it on TV and radio programmes with people of equivalent rank, and William Hague's front benchers are just too boring to argue with. Listening to Gordon Brown chopping logic with Francis Maude won't inspire a great national debate. But if some ministers were allowed to get off their departmental high-horses and take on the real fruit-cakes... Peter Mandelson on *Newsnight* versus Theresa Gorman, say... they could not only win the argument, they could sell tickets.

'Urquhart'

MORE evidence of the paranoia surrounding any references to Peter Mandelson's sexuality have emerged from Whitehall.

Currently in production (at the cost of several thousand pounds to the taxpayer) is an in-house training video aimed at government press officers. Basically a new Labour brainwashing device exhorting the PR mandarins to be on message when it comes to handing out information, the project has not been well received. Nevertheless, one incident has caused much mirth. While filming a reconstruction of an actor playing the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry opening a new building, it was pointed out that the luvvie playing Peter would be required to wear a hard hat as they were on a construction site. True to form, the request had to be run past Mandelson's office before the ok could be given. Mysteriously, however, permission was refused. No reason was given, but it gradually dawned on the more trivia minded present that such an item of headwear was a big favourite with gay Eighties disco band *The Village People*.

IN a desperate attempt to revive his flagging campaign against Rhodri Morgan for the Labour leadership in the Welsh assembly, Blairite clone Alun Michael persuaded Mo Mowlam to speak with him at a public meeting at Croesyceiliog High School near Cwmbran on 11 December.

The meeting preceded the vote for Morgan or Michael by party activists in the sensitive Torfaen constituency. Collette Hume, a young journalist on the *Western Mail*, was delighted when Mowlam agreed to be interviewed before the meeting. Mowlam asked the journalist to interview her on tape while she bustled about — and even while she went to the toilet.

Hume followed gratefully into the toilet with her recorder while the secretary of state prattled away. Emerging from the toilet the journalist was confronted by a furious Alun Michael who denounced her in the most savage terms for having the impertinence to ignore the Welsh office press office and go into the lavatory with a secretary of state. Mo Mowlam intervened at once: "Oh, for God's sake, Alun, why don't you tell your press officer to piss off and give this girl a break. She's only doing her job."

Exit the blushing Michael. The vote was taken later. Michael got 12 votes, Morgan 24.

Another constituency which has voted for Morgan is Neath, whose MP is none other than Peter Hain, parliamentary under-secretary at the Welsh office — and a chief bagman to Alun Michael.

IT IS with great sadness that the *Eye* reports the disintegration of the Northern Ireland UK Unionist Party.

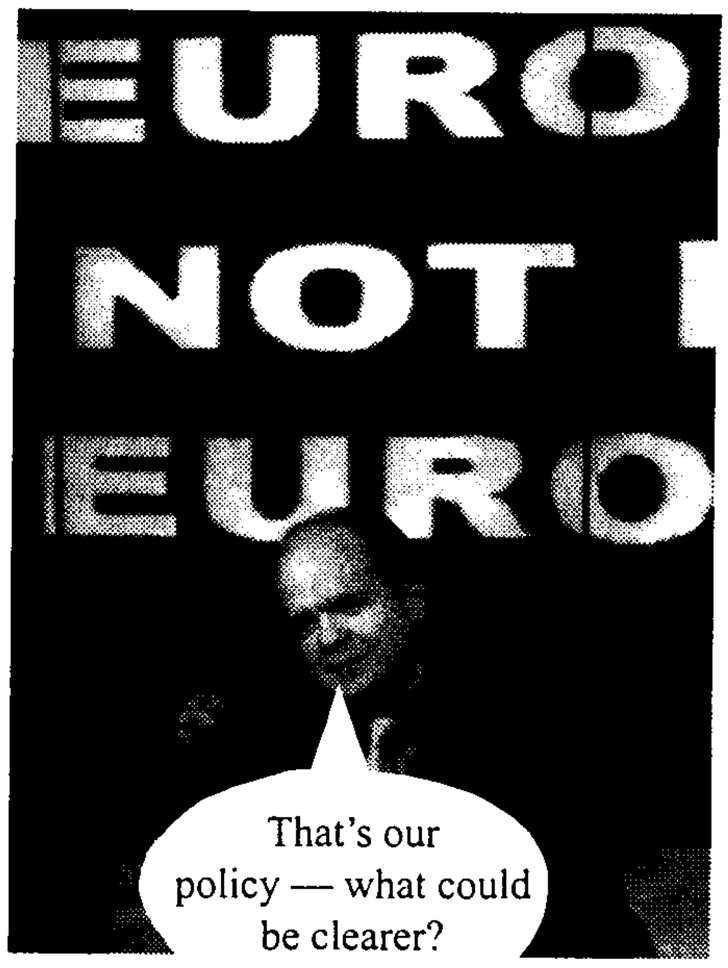
The collapse comes very soon after the party's striking successes winning five seats in the Northern Ireland assembly. Now, sadly, four of the five — Cedric Wilson, Norman Boyd, Roger Hutchinson and Patrick Roche — have resigned from the party citing, among other things, their problems working with the party's leader, the brilliant barrister Robert McCartney QC. When McCartney tried to put his view at a televised press conference, he was interrupted and heckled by Mr Wilson.

Older *Eye* readers will recall the story of the £50,000 Mr McCartney was paid by a Northern Ireland newspaper which absurdly suggested that he had had a public argument in a cafe with another distinguished barrister over which one of them should eat the last cream bun. Irresponsible use of this story also led to the *Eye* losing a libel action with Mr McCartney, who was paid £30,000.

MORE from Wales, where Tory defector Stuart Andrew has been welcomed with open arms by the Labour party as a Welsh assembly candidate while an independent socialist has had his party membership refused (see last *Eye*).

Tory activists in north Wales remain the most surprised by Mr Andrew's change of loyalty. They were at the meeting on 23 October which heard speeches from all potential assembly candidates to rate them for the list system. Stuart Andrew gave a sycophantic oration on the glory of the Tory party, his devotion to it and added a tirade against Labour.

At the end of the evening the candidates' rankings were decided. The candidate listed at number one is almost certain of an assembly seat. Likewise with two and three. Mr Andrew came a poor fifth. Two days later he made his ideological decision and defected to "new" Labour.



THE latest register of members' interests reveals that MPs Maria and Angela Eagle enjoyed a day watching cricket at Old Trafford courtesy of Texaco. The oil company also provided lunch and "a number of small gifts".

The Texan oil men have lots of good reasons for charming the governing party: they are lobbying for a cut in North Sea oil taxes and depend on government exploration licences. The mystery is why the MPs are so keen to take gifts from such a company.

Texaco had to settle a race discrimination suit in 1996 to the tune of $176.1m. A whistleblower later revealed that some of Texaco's top executives referred to black employees as "niggers" and "black jellybeans". How Angela Eagle squares the Texaco jaunt with her proclaimed interest in employment and equal opportunities is unclear. Her sister, once a solicitor specialising in employment law, is also apparently unconcerned by Texaco's employment record.

KREMLINOLOGISTS are intrigued by the latest twist of events at the New Statesman.

The Staggers currently belongs to paymaster-general Geoffrey Robinson... but not for much longer if millionaire author Robert Harris and his old chum Peter Mandelson have their way.

Robinson, a close ally of chancellor Gordon Brown, is now on the critical list as far as Tony Blair is concerned (his treasury job was only secured in the last cabinet reshuffle at Brown's insistence). Sensing Robinson is not long for this world, Harris — with the backing of Blair's chief of staff Jonathan Powell and the support of business associate and former Fabian luminary Nick Butler — has pounced. He has met the group in charge of the blind trust that has run Robinson's affairs since he became paymaster-general and a deal is in the offing.

The prize of wresting the New Statesman from the Brownites is a worthy one for Blairites, and Robinson is not in much of a position to tell them to get their tanks off his lawn. But should Robinson fall, some Brownites at least may seek revenge. DTI minister and close colleague of Mandelson Lord Sainsbury presents an ideal target. The former supermarket boss in charge of supermarket affairs even appears to have landed himself in a spot of trouble over some irksome offshore trusts of late... Sound familiar?

NEIL KINNOCK's bid for the presidency of the European commission has been cruelly rebuffed by the prime minister.

Tony Blair has let it be known via newspaper leaks that he has reluctantly decided against Kinnochio and instead proposes to support the former Italian premier Romano Prodi.

Blair and Prodi have seen eye to eye ever since Blair intervened over the sale of part of the Berlusconi media empire when Rupert Murdoch was encountering problems in acquiring it. Kinnochio, on the other hand, was only able to deliver an over excited broadside against Labour's leftwing in the Guardian during elections to the party's national executive committee. Not much of a contest then.

'Backbiter'

NOOKS and CORNERS

SOME people never give up. Yet another multi-million pound attempt is to be made to revamp the South Bank arts centre and make it whizzy, exciting, friendly, fashionable and, of course, commercially profitable.

First there was Terry Farrell's project in the late 80s to demolish the walkways and put twiddly bits on the "brutal" concrete buildings and make them look friendly and post-modern. Then we had the fatuous and curiously vague scheme by My Lord Rogers (as he then wasn't) to cover the whole area with a wavy glass roof, as if excitement with his structural daring would overcome the problems of cleaning off the filth and dead pigeons. But not even the clout of My Lord Rogers (as he now was) with the "new" Labour government could prevent this monstrously extravagant vanity being ditched.

So now Mr Elliot Bernerd, the latest chairman of the South Bank board, has come up with "an imaginative dynamic set of new proposals... to give added life to the area, to enhance artistic activity..." The usual stuff.

The proposals are a little vague at present: no name of any designer, architect or planner is yet announced. But the essence of this "fundamental rethink" seems to be that there is to be a multiplex cinema (containing the National Film Theatre), a new art gallery and lots and lots of shops. And the clear implication is that not only the hated high-level walkways but also the Hayward Gallery and Queen Elizabeth Hall are to be demolished — and that this is A Good Thing.

But why? Why spend public money on building a new exhibition gallery when there is an existing gallery built with public money only 30 years ago? And are the Hayward and the Queen Elizabeth Hall so irredeemably awful? Has any study been made to see if the problems in both can be solved? After all, the Hayward has been the venue of a large and continuing programme of successful exhibitions and there is something about the sheer intractability of its interior that brings out the best in good exhibition designers. As for the concert hall, its acoustics are extremely good and London cannot afford to lose any home for live music which actually works.

Besides, who says these buildings are hated? People of a certain age just assume they are ugly with a simple knee-jerk reaction against anything made of concrete, but a younger generation finds them remarkably interesting shapes that are among the very best architectural expressions of their time.

Sir Jocelyn Stevens has publicly welcomed Mr Bernard's vision, yet is he not aware that English Heritage has proposed the Hayward Gallery for listing *twice*? In vain, of course: the first time in 1992 the government simply issued a certificate of immunity from listing lest the South Bank board's plans be impeded; and again in 1997 when that certificate expired, and when the government simply said no, lest My Lord Rogers of Riverside be impeded.

Surely if something really needs to be done, the first thing should be to hire a clever architect-cum-master-planner to explore what can be done with the walkways and existing buildings on the site to see if they can be made to work better, rather than assuming that new buildings must be better than old.

After all, the original design for the Hayward complex by the late Ron Herron and other GLC architects envisaged shops and other desirable public amenities which were subsequently cut. If there really is lots of public money that can be thrown at the South Bank, it should be spent on improving these structures as well as on completing the original curtailed design of the Royal Festival Hall — surely still the best "modern" building in Britain. And if new buildings really are required, they can be built on the car parks and other dreary spaces in between. But such an approach, of course, would be too prosaic and sensible for a government obsessed by image and gesture.

Will Chris Smith, our culture secretary, wake up to the fact that to hate the Hayward is the preserve of the stuffy and reactionary, while the really fashionable and young like it a lot and want to leave it alone? Not much chance of that, I fear. So the great Wheel of Fashion grinds on. And on.

MY ILLUSTRATION shows an interesting new building proposed for Shude Hill, a prominent site in Sheffield — no, not the Classical pile on the left but the extension to the right.

The bit to the left, which fronts Commercial Street, is the former gas offices designed by the local architect Charles Hadfield in 1875. Behind it the same firm built a warehouse in 1890 running along Shude Hill. This has a cast-iron interior and is listed Grade II, but that has not prevented its demolition — despite the efforts of the Hallamshire Historic Buildings Society.

A scheme for converting it into flats foundered, so now it is coming down to make way for an Ibis Hotel, a chain renowned for economy in both prices and in architecture. Readers will admire the drama with which the service entrance arch is treated, the subtlety with which the regular fenestration relates to the Commercial Street building and the exciting difference of scale in relation to the unassuming pub at the other end.

The new Hotel Ibis has been designed by Race Cottam Associates of Sheffield, whose design 'n' build manager Mr S.F. Mountford insists that "successful cities must change to survive and remain vibrant... Race Cottam Associates, in conjunction with the city planners, have ensured that the skyline of the building, the scale and type of materials, are in harmony with the Commercial Street building."

That says it all, really. Happy Christmas!

'Piloti'

MORE TALES FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

AVID watchers of the Phoney Pharaoh were unsurprised to see him perform his favourite legal manoeuvre once again in the industrial tribunal brought against him by Kes Wingfield, one of the bodyguards who accompanied his son and the Princess of Wales on the fatal night in Paris last year.

The second day of Mr Wingfield's tribunal, following the presentation of his own evidence, began and ended with the announcement of an amicable settlement on the charges of constructive dismissal.

One figure other than the Pharaoh himself who must have been relieved at not having to appear was TV producer Richard Belfield. He featured largely in Wingfield's evidence, which gave an interesting insight into the circumstances that surrounded the production of his universally panned ITV "documentary" *Diana: Secrets Behind The Crash*.

In March Wingfield was summoned to Harrods by his superiors and told that he was to meet "a reporter from the *Mirror*" who wished to talk to him in Fayed's office. This reporter turned out in fact to be Belfield, who showed admirable journalistic detachment in requesting that Wingfield furnish him with details of the conspiracy that had killed Diana and Dodi. Wingfield incredulously denied knowledge of any such conspiracy, demanded that Belfield switch off his tape recorder and told him he had no interest in taking part in any documentary. At this point Fayed himself appeared and, with his usual charm, referred to Wingfield as "the bastard who fucked it up in Paris". The bastard replied that he had no intention of appearing in any television programmes.

The Phoney Pharaoh is not a man to take no for an answer, and Wingfield was lined up as Belfield's star attraction anyway. When he was informed of arrangements for his interview the following May, the bodyguard once again told his superiors that he would not go through with it. At this point he was summoned to the tent outside Fayed's Scottish castle, from where the Pharaoh performs all of his business for fear of being bugged indoors, and subjected to a 15-minute tirade of abuse which touched on many of Fayed's favourite subjects — the size of his genitals was apparently expounded upon in some detail — and concluded with the instruction that Wingfield would appear in the ITV programme or be sacked. Wisely the bodyguard chose the third option and handed in his resignation.

When reminded of these events at the tribunal, Fayed's lawyer Matthew Reeve claimed that Mr Belfield would furnish the court with a different version of events, to the extent of claiming that Fayed was not even present at the meeting in his own office. Alas, this was not to be. Overnight, it seems, Fayed had a change of mind.

Despite the fact that in August he denounced Mr Wingfield, along with Trevor Rees-Jones, as having been responsible for the crash, he now seemed rather better disposed towards him. On the morning of 17 December it was announced that "the parties accepted in good faith their recollections differ about the circumstances leading to Mr Wingfield's resignation". What is more "both parties express the wish that the full truth about the tragic deaths of Diana, Princess of Wales, and Dodi Fayed will emerge from the inquiry currently being conducted by the magistrate in France". And not, it would seem, from pisspoor ITV documentaries with the Phoney Pharaoh effectively acting as executive producer.

WE ALL know of the Phoney Pharaoh's enthusiasm for conspiracy theories about the "murder" of Di and Dodi. But what is his interest in that other great modern mystery, the death of JFK?

It is exactly 20 years since the American writer Edward Jay Epstein (a close friend of Sir Jammy Fishpaste) produced his book *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald*, which promoted the "Oswald as Communist spy" angle. One of Epstein's sources was a shadowy character called George De Mohrenschildt, who was said to be some kind of Soviet handler for Oswald.

Alas, De Mohrenschildt ended up dead half-way through his series of "exclusive" interviews with the author. He had already told Epstein that he had been under surveillance in the early 1960s. "De Mohrenschildt," Epstein writes in a footnote on p.315, "suspected that there were other break-ins in the years that followed. When he lived in Haiti in 1964, he was certain that his home was searched because of his relations with a Kuwaiti sheikh named Mohammed Fayad (*sic*)."

As the *Eye* has reported before, Fayed was indeed in Haiti during 1964, posing as a wealthy Kuwaiti sheikh and acting as a port commissioner for Papa Doc — though he had to make a quick getaway the following year after being caught with his fingers in the till. From the Grassy Knoll to the Pont de l'Alma: the plot thickens...

NOT everyone is a fan of Mohamed Fayed, but staff and children of the Beth Marie centre for special needs children at Sevenoaks, Kent, have cause to be grateful to the Phoney Pharaoh — for his money if not his taste.

The centre, which helps children with autism and behavioural difficulties, moved into Princess Di's old school building, West Heath, when Fayed bought it on behalf of Beth Marie's director, Val May, last summer.

The school now has a new logo. It used to show a bird flying out of a nest, symbolising the recovering child flying to a new and brighter future. Now, however, there are two birds — "to represent Princess Diana and Dodi Al Fayed", says the *Sevenoaks Chronicle*.

EYE TV

Christmas ads (all commercial channels)

IN what has always rather unfairly been called the run-up to Christmas, only commercial television can manage more than a brisk trot. While the rest of us limp wheezily between ill-fated shopping expeditions, mar-athon card-signing sessions and grim corporate jollies with detested colleagues, ITV and Channel 4 unveil all their best and brightest programmes to fill in the gaps between the ads.

The advertisers, of course, pull the stops out. Christmas ads tend to be more insistent than most, more lavish, more aggressive, more aspirational. After an evening's TV at the moment you are liable to feel fat, ugly, poor, scared, badly dressed and hopeless at DIY. Are we really supposed to want a Black & Decker 4-1 Multisander? Is there some tiny, ghastly possibility that someone might buy us one?

Most insistent, of course, are the retail chains who find it hard to believe that anyone will buy anything unless told to by a celebrity. Tesco still has Prunella Scales (doing her Jane Horrocks impression) and Jane Horrocks (doing her Prunella Scales impression), who each run into shop assistants approximately 10,000 times more helpful than any in real life.

W.H. Smith has its family of Nicholas Lyndhursts, Safeway its chortlesome infants voiced by comedians (and Ruby Wax), while Sainsbury's has constructed an entire campaign around John Cleese in a Santa hat. Mugging it up for all it's worth (which no doubt runs well into six figures) the former comedian skilfully distracts you from all thoughts of Christmas, let alone buying anything from Sainsbury's. Instead you start to remember how funny he used to be, and to marvel at the gravity-bending blackness of his moustache and eyebrows.

On an appreciably lower budget, the Co-op has bought not Chris Tarrant but Mrs Chris Tarrant, who tells us that he likes to drink champagne and eat melons, which she buys for him every week from the Co-op. Do we believe this? Do we believe anything?

For the most vertiginous attempts at suspension of belief, however, we must turn to the drinks ads. Archer's Peach Schnapps — a brand name that begs several questions — has emerged from nowhere this year with a series of incoherent, faintly hallucinogenic films oddly reminiscent of the seminal Ferrero Rocher ad, as of course is his Lordship himself. (This ad can be seen particularly frequently in the Anglia region.) Bailey's presents a Sex In The Lift scenario, although after drinking a couple of glasses, Being Violently Sick In The Lift seems rather more likely. Malibu drags us screaming to the Caribbean, where the entire region is reverberating to what seems like a minor earthquake, or possibly the aftermath to Hurricane Mitch, but is just loud music at a party at which everyone is drinking Malibu. On the screen are stamped the words "Malibu Warning", presumably a reminder to keep a bucket by your bedside. The golden rule of drinks ads still applies: the higher the budget, the more emetic the drink.

For a real hangover — and ads for hangover cures have increased exponentially over the past week — you could probably try one of the exciting new designer perfumes currently advertised on all channels. For Hugo (by Hugo Boss) we see beautiful young Aryans in t-shirts and leather jackets striding purposefully around the roof of a skyscraper. "Don't overact," says a boy with floppy hair, as his lips say something else. "Don't overthink," says a girl, without moving her lips at all. "And don't overstink," says the boy, in Italian or perhaps Croatian. All ad men believe their audience is stupid, and will not notice that the ad has been abysmally dubbed from a foreign language. (See also ads for Thomson widescreen TVs and that ridiculous steam-powered vacuum cleaner. "It's steam!" "It's clean!")

The more traditional perfumes provide more traditional ads, ie wordless and completely incomprehensible. Little Red Riding Hood walks into a gold-plated bank vault, where she finds stacks of huge bottles of Chanel No 5. (Why a bank vault? Because you'll need to rob one before you can afford to buy any.) A wolf howls. Riding Hood, who might have been quite pretty before she became a model and starved herself to death, turns round, goes sssh! and walks into the snow. Meaningless? Well of course, but it's also expensive, which is the only meaning anyone in the advertising industry ever needs.

For absolute incomprehensibility, though, this year's biscuit is taken by Gap, whose clothes are advertised by a man sitting behind a piano singing "What are you doing on new year's eve?" in a dreadful whiny voice. You can't quite see what he's wearing, but you do start to wonder what you are going to do on new year's eve. Other than buy lots of unsold marked down Christmas goods in the Gap sale, that is...

'Couch Potato'

MEDIA NEWS

RUPERT MURDOCH's Fox network still hasn't contradicted police claims in the United States (see *Eye* 963) that three actors were found fabricating a "reality special" documentary about nasty neighbours after officers responded to 911 calls about a flock of pink flamingoes let loose on a suburban housing estate.

No doubt executives will explain all in time for next year's trial — assuming they're not distracted by the sackings ordered by the Dirty Digger in the wake of a recent ratings collapse.

Fox has been losing viewers across the board. The first episode of the new *X-Files*, for example, lost 26 percent of its audience compared to the equivalent show last November; its comedies are in trouble and there's no sign of any new drama successes.

The solution has been swift and simple: to schedule yet more "reality" tat — or what one American TV critic calls the Fox "gross-out hour". This kicked off with *The World's Most Shocking Moments: Caught on Tape*, a worthy successor to *When Animals Attack*, *When Good Pets Go Bad*, *The World's Deadliest Police Chases* and *Stalking The Stalkers*.

After 30 minutes of (allegedly authentic) camcorder mayhem, viewers were treated to a half hour of studio appearances from assorted unfortunates: a teenager with half his skull missing after being shot at point blank range; a woman who makes a living popping her eyes out of their sockets; and a man who can eat spaghetti and blow it out of his nose.

Ominously the ratings soared, bringing Fox its highest audience for the time slot in six years and what is widely regarded as a new low in American broadcasting.

Fox has also relaunched its prestigious *Fox Files* documentary series. After disappointing viewing figures for previous episodes, a new approach is being tried. The first show included segments such as "Pay Up Or Die" about businessmen facing blackmail demands, and "Pyro's Meth Hell" about a middle-class man addicted to methylated spirits and pyromania — complete with bloody video footage. How much further up-market can Fox go?

BIRTSPEAK

"I am delighted to announce that Penny Young will join the Broadcast Strategy Team as Project Leader, Tribes Implementation Strategy. Penny will work with senior colleagues in Broadcast, News and Production to carry forward our important work on audience segmentation, drawing on her extensive background in media and social research, management experience with Network Radio Research and her current job as Senior Adviser, Corporate Planning."

— BBC Broadcast Memo from Robin Foster, Director, Strategy and Channel Management.

AN ANGRY solicitor's letter threatening libel proceedings has gone from the BBC to the *Sunday Times*. The letter complains about the paper's exposé on 7 December of the business interests of BBC chairman Sir Christopher Bland.

In particular the letter protests about the *Sunday Times*'s revelation that Exel Logistics, a subsidiary of NFC of which Bland is chairman, has a £2.8m contract to distribute books for the BBC. That isn't fair, say the solicitors. The *Sunday Times* should have pointed out that the Exel contract was entered into *before* Sir Christopher became BBC chairman. The *Eye* understands that *Sunday Times* lawyers are preparing to reply to this trivial whine with a polite version of the famous response in the ground-breaking libel case of Arkell v Pressdram (ie "fuck off").

In fact the real purpose of the letter was to stop any further discussion about Bland's role at NFC. The privatisation of the National Freight Corporation in the early 1980s was held up by the Tory government at the time as an idealistic exercise in democratic ownership. The workers, mainly lorry-drivers, owned 83 percent of the shares. An elaborate structure of democratic control gave them a substantial say in company decisions, and a workers' "golden share" backed this up with an effective veto.

The company boomed along quite nicely until the directors grew impatient. They called in Sir Christopher who, without an hour's extra effort, had won their respect by scooping £9m for himself in share deals at London Weekend Television. As soon as he became NFC chairman in 1994, he enthusiastically joined his new colleagues in their rush to rid the company of the sentimental democratic ideas over which his fellow Tories had drooled.

The percentage of NFC shares owned by the workers has slumped from a high of 83 to 7 percent and is still falling. The golden share has gone. So has the democratic control structure. Four executives left with golden goodbyes, thousands of workers were made redundant with pay-offs from the pension fund. Even before Bland got there the firm had blithely stopped paying pension contributions thus "saving" some £200m.

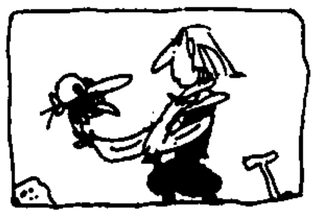
Chairman Bland is paid £200,000 for a three-day week (he's meant to spend four days at the BBC so the poor chap never gets a day off) and has built up his shareholding to 1.5 million, far far more than the shareholdings of all the other directors put together. Judicious flogging of assets left NFC stuffed with cash. Where better to spend it... than on the shareholders? Last summer, in a fantastic spree, millions of pounds were handed out to shareholders. Sir Christopher Bland got £660,000 in cash. If he ever runs short again, he has options to buy and sell 490,797 shares. (For the story of how a third-rate Tory speculator became a plutocratic media king see The Tale of Pigling Bland, Eye 826, 13 August 1993).

PS: The transport minister who privatised NFC with much hogwash about the "grand new idea of worker share-ownership" was Norman Fowler.

PPS: In 1990 Norman Fowler was knighted, and resigned from the cabinet to spend more time with his family. He took on a number of lucrative directorships — including one at NFC. In his time as director (1990 to 1997) he pioneered the Bland revolution.

PPS: Sir Norman now speaks from the Tory frontbench and often muses aloud on the case for private enterprise and workers' share-ownership.

LUVVIES



I'm just trying to say that I think it's going to get harder and harder if people don't start treating actors in this country with respect a little bit more... I think actors are far more reluctant, and particularly when people like Alan and Helen receive such maulings in the press, I have to say. Some of it was so personal it made me really angry. They put their careers on the line, they do. They don't need to do that, we don't need to do it. We do it because we love it.

ROBERT LINDSAY
The Independent

"BBC Boss in Hotel Row Riddle," the Scottish edition of the *News of the Screws* reported on 13 December.

According to the unusually coy rag, Dougie Wernham, executive editor of BBC Scotland sport, had been "at the centre of a mystery bust-up" as Scottish sports hacks gathered in Parma ahead of the Rangers UEFA cup clash.

There was, however, no mystery at all among the Scottish scribes present, including the *Screws*'s own man on the spot. After a much-extended journey to Italy during which the thirsty Jock journos indulged themselves in time-honoured fashion, Wernham commenced a lively discussion with the *Daily Record*'s sports editor James Traynor on the subject of baldness.

Traynor, who is follicly challenged, took umbrage and after an initial skirmish in the restaurant the discussion continued in Wernham's room at the Hotel Palace Maria Luigia. Other hacks were roused from their stupors in the early hours by the sound of fist on flesh, accompanied by loud screams. Led by the former Scotland player Alan McInally (now a Sky pundit), hotel staff and hacks broke down the locked door of Room 204 to find Traynor dispensing what passes for justice in his native Airdrie to the cowering BBC boss. In the resulting melee McInally damaged his toe on the room's wrecked mirror and Traynor suffered carpet burns to his forehead as he was dragged away. The hotel later added £130 to Wernham's bill to cover the damage to his room.

Oddly, for a headline-hungry gang not averse to exposing the private lives of Gazza or Andy Goram, not a word of this was reported by hacks to their newspapers. Wernham and Traynor both refused to comment, as did the editor of the *Daily Record* and BBC Scotland. Wernham was back at work last week sporting a large black eye and facial contusions which, he told curious colleagues, were caused by "walking into a door".

Roger Scruton might be billed as a rabid right-winger. But think again: he's the brightest intellect of our time... In the flesh, the thought processes seem to press on his body, causing constant, nervous movement.

BRIAN APPLEYARD
Sunday Times

Down on the Fish Farm

THE calm waters of Scotland's fish farms continue to disguise an industry in turmoil. Guy Mace, managing director of the giant salmon producer Hydro Seafoods GSP, has been sent packing by his Scandinavian masters. Hydro Seafoods is at the centre of the outbreak of infectious salmon anaemia (ISA) currently devastating Scottish fish farms.

Mace was recently called before Scottish office officials to explain how an estimated 25,000 farm fish had escaped into the wild from one of his company sites where ISA is suspected to be present.

Meanwhile m'learned Mcfriends scent rich pickings. Outraged sport anglers are busy preparing a legal challenge to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), alleging that it has failed in its statutory duty to protect the coastal environment.

Legal action may also be taken by the Scottish office. Lord Sewel, Scottish office minister for the environment, told anglers at a recent trophy dinner that he knew which fish farm had supplied the diseased smolts and that this information "may figure in court action".

The SO insists its policy is to eradicate ISA in Scottish waters, yet seven months after the start of the outbreak it is still allowing fish farmers to process and sell salmon from 11 sites where the ISA virus has been identified. Providing fish show no clinical signs of the disease they may be sold on to an unsuspecting public.

'Old Trout'

"It's the ghost of Christmas future!"

LEGAL NEWS

THE man who dealt with the divorce of the Princess of Wales is having even more trouble negotiating his own marital break-up.

Anthony Julius of Mishcon de Reya began proceedings via law firm Solomon Taylor where Simone Katzenberg represented him. But after a while found he himself dissatisfied and changed law firm. He instructed Sandra Davis to deal with his divorce, a fellow worker at Mishcon de Reya and a friend of his and the former Mrs Julius.

Davis also acts for journalist Dina Rabinovitch, the woman Julius intends to marry as soon as the divorce proceedings are complete. Rabinovitch is the daughter of one of Julius's clients. But Julius's problems don't end with complications over law firms.

Rabinovitch is a strict orthodox Jew and her father a high-ranking rabbi in Israel. As such she cannot marry someone if adultery has been committed before the marriage takes place. Julius, famed for his legal brilliance, must now show it off from the unfamiliar surroundings of the witness box. He will have to appear before the Jewish Courts to convince them that no adulterous acts have occurred between him and Ms Rabinovitch.

ONE of the main reasons for the lord chancellor's drive to cut legal aid is the very heavy charges from experts who give evidence in court.

One recent example which raised eyebrows on even the richest lawyer's face was that of Mr Chris Adams, one of the country's leading neurosurgeons. Mr Adams gave evidence in a recent libel action. He was in the box for a full afternoon and naturally spent many hours preparing his careful report.

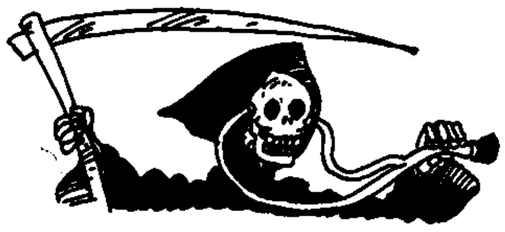
He submitted a bill for £32,000. When this was challenged, he angrily produced details of his earnings in the private health sector, which amounted to approximately £1m a year. His claim was therefore entirely legitimate.

A FAMILIAR defence to driving offences is the plea that the summons never arrived in the post. Magistrates are not usually very keen on this plea, but here's an exception.

Manchester magistrates recently dismissed a claim by Mr Glyn Wiseman that his summons for speeding had never arrived, and fined him £70. A furious Mr Wiseman appealed to Manchester crown court where Judge Humphries upheld his appeal and struck out the fine. "Who knows," mused the judge, "whether one of the hundreds of thousands of these notices sent out did not evade the system"?

His question was not answered, but barrister Adrian Farrow hastened to tell the court that the Wiseman case was very exceptional and had presented the authorities with a "unique difficulty". It could not and should not be used by other motorists as a loophole in the law.

FACT TO REMEMBER: Mr Glyn Wiseman was for many years head of the Greater Manchester police ticket office, which sends out summonses for driving offences.



DOING THE ROUNDS

WOULD you want your life support machine operated by an unregulated technician? Probably not. Yet the perfusionists who supervise heart-lung bypass machines during open-heart surgery have no regulation at all.

This fact hit the press recently after a baby undergoing surgery at Guy's bled to death in seconds when a heart bypass machine modified by an unsupervised trainee perfusionist suffered a catastrophic failure. Four-month-old Hannah Shepherd died after a tube connecting her to the machine "blew off and whirled around the room", covering the floor in blood.

Describing Hannah's death as "violent and shocking", Southwark coroner Dr Selena Lynch called on the government to urgently consider registration and regulation controls of the operators of heart-lung bypass machines to minimise the chance of it happening again.

She is preparing a report for the department of health. But her plea is old news to the DoH. For some years perfusionist themselves have applied to become regulated under the Council For The Professions Supplementary To Medicine. A submission in June 1996 was made by the Perfusion Liaison Group of the Society of Perfusionists of Great Britain and Ireland comprising, among others, Magdi Yacoub, Professor of Cardiac Surgery at the Royal Brompton hospital, and other eminent cardiac surgeons and anaesthetists. It failed. At every stage, obstacles were presented by... the department of health.

Continuing the theme of unregulated care, a nurse working in nursing and residential homes in Swansea has complained to the *Eye* about the supervision of patients. "The local authority social services department, which overseas residential clients in these homes, are removing them from the care of nurses and putting their care into the hands of unqualified care assistants, who must now administer drugs and contact doctors if the resident falls ill. The care assistants are unhappy about this as they feel it is too great a responsibility, and they are not being paid any more for their new duties..."

● Has anything changed in Labour's "first class" NHS? Not at Adenbrooke's NHS Trust in Cambridge. A circular from Fiona Ritchie, general manager of surgical services, is illuminating.

"There are two issues which I wish to bring to your attention in relation to routine elective activity. The first concerns restrictions. There continues to be a considerable over-performance across the trust for North and east Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. Half way through the financial year, we had completed 53% of the N&E Hertfordshire contract and 64% of the Bedfordshire contract despite having restrictions in place from April. It is therefore important that patients from these areas should not be offered admission for routine elective surgery until they approach 18 months so as to leave room in the contract for the emergency and clinically urgent patients."

Ms Ritchie confirms that treatment by postcode is still rife. "There have been under-performances against contracts in other areas... it is therefore no longer necessary to delay the admission of routine elective patients from areas except Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire..." But what do you tell the patients?

"There have been some instances where consultants and other staff have written or spoken to patients informing them that their purchasers have run out of money and cannot afford to pay for their treatment in the current financial year. Whilst this may be a true reflection of the financial position, we are still required by the National Health Service Executive not to bring funding debates to patients at this level.... The surgical services board... has agreed a form of words to be used... as follows:

'Because of the need to give priority to emergency and urgent patients, patients waiting for routine operations and investigations may have to wait (x) months before admission. We shall keep you informed if there is likely to be any change in the time scale and assure you that we shall offer you admission at the earliest opportunity'." Still no mention of lack of money or rationing.

Happy New Year.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE mad cow disease group SEAC (the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee) has seen a big exodus of its most experienced scientific advisers on BSE.

A possible reason for some of the departures is the shrill voice of the consumer. On SEAC this belongs to Harriet Kimbell, a law lecturer from Guildford, Surrey, who was brought in under "new" Labour as an observer for the Consumers' Association. SEAC's day-long meetings, held every three months, were draining enough before the lawyer's arrival early this year. Afterwards, according to one scientist, they became intolerable.

Kimbell's cries of "What's an antibody?" and "What's an antigen?" apparently made basic business (chopping through technical texts) slow-going. "She kept screaming 'I don't understand a bloody word! What the bloody hell are you talking about?'"

Last July the committee was again talking about the theoretical possibility that the disease agent responsible for BSE may conceivably have infected some of the nation's 20 million sheep (40 million after lambing in summer). While evidently a fresh subject to Kimbell, it was hardly new to the committee.

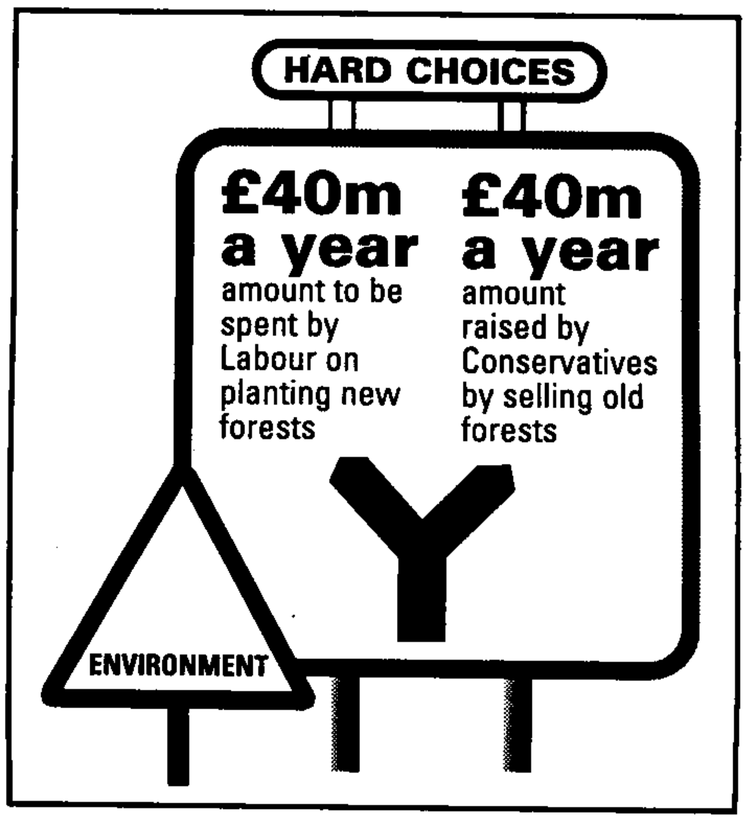
For almost a decade SEAC had realised that BSE might not only have come from sheep but might also have gone back into them. While no "wild" cases has been found in sheep, scientists have been able to infect them in lab conditions, usually by injection into the brain. The BSE in sheep debate thus arises at SEAC pretty regularly, usually prompted by claims concerning various sorts of BSE-detection kits.

In July SEAC decided it was sensible to form a full subcommittee to consider the question. However, at least two members felt more could be done so they spoke to the media. Virologist Jeffrey Almond, who seems to favour more drastic abattoir controls for lamb — ie throwing more of it away — told Radio 4's *Farming Today* we could face a "potential national emergency". His tone turned more officious in *Nature*, in which he opined that the UK needed to find a "risk reduction strategy" as opposed to "a risk minimization strategy".

Ms Kimbell ploughed a separate but equally public furrow. On 10 August the Consumers' Association dashed off a letter of protest to the department of health. While described as "confidential", its existence and gist were somehow leaked to *Nature*. On 3 September the journal published CA claims that "the government was not keeping consumers properly informed about the BSE sheep issue and excessively concentrating decision-making in the hands of experts". Ms Kimbell, best remembered at SEAC for crying "I don't understand a bloody thing!", told *Nature*: "The public should be able to make the same informed judgements on their eating habits as I, as a member of SEAC, can."

The September sheep scare sparked by Almond and Kimbell brought British sheep markets to a near standstill.

'Flapdoodle'


HARD CHOICES
£40m a year
amount to be spent by Labour on planting new forests
£40m a year
amount raised by Conservatives by selling old forests
ENVIRONMENT

SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Railtrack

RAILTRACK's corporate policy for 1998 — being a bastard to its own customers — appears to have backfired.

Of course the customers in question — the operators of passenger and freight trains — are powerless to trouble Railtrack and have no choice but to pay vast sums (much of it from the public purse) to use a network that hardly justifies its premium fees.

Aware of its customers' impotence, Railtrack took to slagging them off in public in a bizarre attempt to influence the rail regulator's review of Railtrack charges. As if this act itself were not outrageous enough, the criticisms levelled at the operators actually applied first and foremost to *Railtrack*. When Railtrack finance director Norman Broadhurst moaned that operators are incentivised to "cut costs and fill trains to maximise revenue", he forgot to mention that Railtrack's policy is to, er, cut costs, fill tracks and maximise revenue.

Following the same tack chief executive Gerald Corbett publicly accused operators of causing too many delays and failing to invest. He seriously suggested they cut the number of trains to improve punctuality, when the obvious need is for Railtrack to invest some of its own money in creating more track. Corbett's allegations fly in the face of statistics showing that Railtrack's mismanagement of the network has been responsible for up to 80 percent of minutes of delay on some routes.

Corbett knows most operators were given only seven years to reap the benefits of any investments, which could in any case be undermined by recession or competition. In complete contrast, Railtrack is here to stay and its income from train operators is effectively guaranteed by the state — yet Railtrack's investments are few and far between. (Even for the west-coast line upgrade Railtrack demanded, and will get, a slice of Virgin's profits.) This did not stop Railtrack chairman Bob Horton claiming his company had "made good headway on our £17bn 10-year investment programme". Where?

Railtrack is painting stations and renewing some worn-out bits of the network, but this comes out of the housekeeping budget. And Railtrack is slacking even here. Its original replacement rate for rails indicated each rail must last 128 years; but a recent recruitment advert headed "Help us to stop sending money" explained that Railtrack aims to refocus its spending "towards enhancing the life of our current assets and away from renewals".

A rare example where Railtrack genuinely invested money (£13m of its £2.5bn annual income) was in Buckinghamshire, where Chiltern Trains desperately needed more slots for services. But Railtrack botched even this modest upgrade and Chiltern is considering cutting a tenth of rush-hour trains because Railtrack is not providing enough capacity.

The new regulator, Chris Bolt, was unimpressed with Railtrack's subterfuge. He has announced that Railtrack is making far too much money on routine maintenance expenditure which involves no commercial risk. He wants Railtrack's assets revalued at little more than their original sale price in the great Tory giveaway — a third of their current market value.

What effect this has on Railtrack's notorious reluctance to grow its own business remains to be seen (the new charging methods start in 2001). But the regulator's lashing was worthwhile just for the enjoyable reaction from Railtrack's normally smug boardroom. Corbett said the review was "disappointing" and petulantly predicted that the new methods could prevent Railtrack completing the fast line to the Channel tunnel. The regulator was not fooled and said Railtrack should only have embarked on such a project as a self-standing undertaking.

Railtrack had already used that project as an excuse to demand money up front for creating more slots on the cramped London to Edinburgh line on the ground that the chunnel line had taken Railtrack to its borrowing limit. In other words, the more Railtrack spreads its wings the remoter becomes the prospect of any serious investment in the lines Railtrack was formed to manage and upgrade. Surely another good reason Railtrack should not be allowed to muscle in on London Underground's semi-privatisation?

'Dr B. Ching'

Rotten Boroughs

Fraudbusters

AT LAST some good news for the 20 staff working for the London organised fraud investigation team (Lofit) who were padlocked out of their offices in Stanmore, Middlesex, in October.

A report by the benefit fraud inspectorate had concluded that Lofit should be closed down. Told in no uncertain terms that their services were no longer required, some staff faced police questioning and were warned that charges may follow. None did. A deal has now been struck which could see the fraudbusters pocket in excess of £150,000 between them.

The deal was struck after Westminster council, the body nominated to pay Lofit personnel on behalf of the Association for London Government (ALG), was told by the ALG to prepare cheques of £11,000 each for 13 staff and a cheque of £30,000 for Rod Elliot, who managed the pisspoor outfit. No justification for the payouts has been forthcoming and the money is way above statutory limits.

Two Lofit members who were suspended from duty months before the BFI stepped in do particularly well from the deal. Both Lisa Buckingham and Vic Watling will receive £11,000 each despite facing accusations of gross misconduct. The national audit office (NAO) is set to investigate whether the payments should go ahead.

Stressbusters

CITIZENS of cash-strapped Knowsley on Murkeyside, one of the poorest and most deprived urban areas of Britain, were baffled to hear that 35 councillors and staff had attended a management course at the luxury St David's Park Hotel in north Wales costing more than £100,000.

The break was organised by California-based consultants Senn Delaney, specialists in the "touchy-feely" personal development approach to management. So far, Knowsley chief executive David Henshaw, still reeling from criticism over his role in the appointment of Norman Bettison as chief constable of Merseyside, has not provided councillors with evidence of which council body approved the spending.

The idea of normally hard-faced Knowsleyites holding hands and saying they love each other is entertaining enough. But according to 72-year-old council leader Jim Keight, the jaunt also taught councillors ways of thinking other than in straight lines.

FACT: Big cuts to services — social services and education in particular — are expected when Knowsley's budget is formally finalised in a couple of months' time.

ANOTHER FACT: When councillors and officers are confronted by angry protesters *this* time, they can always stuff their hands in their pockets and squeeze one of the useful stress-busting plastic discs provided by Senn Delaney.

Red Face of the Week

KEN O'TOOLE (*sic*), Tory member of Rushcliffe council in Nottinghamshire, has been involved in a distressing "incident" at Glasgow's Central Hotel.

Staying there during a week-long conference, Mr O'Toole left the hotel one night for a "late-night stroll". Soon afterwards he returned with a woman who accompanied him upstairs. Moments later an excitable O'Toole rushed down to reception claiming his wallet containing £500 and credit cards had been stolen.

Who was the mystery woman and why was the respectable councillor with her? Mrs O'Toole, who was back home in Nottingham at the time, has been enlightening: "I can honestly say as a Christian that he hasn't had sex with a prostitute." Whatever can she mean?

Anglesey

CRISIS-HIT Anglesey is reeling after auditors raided the planning department and removed computer equipment and documents.

They refused to comment officially on the matter, but it is believed their investigation centres on planning applications submitted by senior officers and members of the authority.

For the most part these were approved without too much fuss and subsequently altered to enable much larger properties to be built. One application is said to have been for a building covering 190 square metres of Anglesey. Measurements after completion showed it covered 400sq ms.

Meanwhile planning officer Elwyn Owen has been suspended without prejudice. This will presumably allow him more time to complete the considerable amount of private work he has been accepting. So much private work that other officers have had to be "sub-contracted" to carry out his official duties.

How They Are Related

BRIGHTON council leader Lord Bassam has enjoyed 15 years in the post during which time the borough has had an excellent working relationship with private consultants KPMG.

First, Jane Howard left a high-flying job at KPMG to become assistant to chief executive Glynn Jones. After a few years she left and was replaced by a former colleague at KPMG, Steve Rayson. The constant turmoil of council reorganisation since Rayson joined required many private sector consultants to plug the gaps. A major supplier was KPMG, which consistently hired out individuals at £500 a day in addition to its regular fee-earning assignments.

Those who thought Steve Bassam's peerage from Tony Blair earlier this year might lead him away from municipal matters were entirely mistaken. Now Bassam holds the reins at the council, attends the House of Lords and even holds down a private sector consultancy job with... KPMG!

Tayside

MORE woe following the farcical reorganisation of government in Scotland a couple of years ago.

It has emerged that when Tayside regional council bit the dust on 31 March 1996, it left debts of "about" £4m. Auditors can't be more specific since the council's financial records are so pisspoor no one understands them.

So far there has been a distinct lack of ex-Tayside council folk willing to come forward to take responsibility for the mess, although former council leaders have been quick to point the blame at dodgy computer equipment bought by the old council.

The accounts commission for Scotland is now sure to come down heavily with surcharges on former councillors and officers. Or everyone will get off scot free. Which do you think more likely?

White Elephant of the Week

ENFIELD, in deepest rural Middlesex, has so much cash to spare it has just spent £100,000 on an extremely successful survey.

Councillors sent a 20-page questionnaire to householders and residents asking for their views on how the borough doesn't work. But things didn't quite go to plan.

The document was sent out in August, perhaps the worst month for finding people at home. Those who even bothered to look at it claimed it was as taxing as a rather difficult exam, and that it needed at least three hours to complete.

Perhaps this is why out of a potential 100,000 forms just, er, 85, were returned.

Situated off Bedford Road. Public transport facilities include Clapham High Street (British Rail) and Clapham North (Underground) Stations. Shopping amenities are at the High Street. Recreation pursuits can be found at Clapham Common.

Lambeth Council property auction

Pseuds Corner

The Studio series, for middle to senior managers, has been designed to facilitate and encourage a synergy between personal and organisational development outcomes.

Civil Service College directory update

"Think of Goldie," he warns me, "as a character who sticks his neck out, stretches the soul or gives you an axiom, the great axioms of debate about what music can achieve. There has to be a lamb of sacrifice for this."

Himself, he means: he is the lamb. Although later he says: "I don't mind being the lamb because everyone is going to be eating that lamb and my synthenisism will be somewhere in their own bloodstream."

With Goldie, words mean what he wants them to. "A sombre" is a premonition. Without any apparent knowledge of the Dutch artist who drew Ascending and Descending, "Escher" is an adjective suggesting self-perpetuation. "Synthenisism" means "I use a little bit from this and a little bit from that." His malapropisms are aggressive and uncorrectable.

ANDREW BILLEN interviewing "GOLDIE"
Evening Standard

Dissolving into a sleepy chant of "M-I-L-L-E-N-N-I-U-M", the song [by the Boo Radleys] heaves once or twice, magma-like, before taking flight, massive and graceful — it's like the Dome snapping its guy-ropes and rising up over London like a new, broken moon. It's this song, and nothing else, that should fill the Dome on New Year's Eve next year: it has all the sorrow, beauty and weight of a thousand years.

CAITLIN MORAN
Times

Fourth Dial Art presents *Hair Daze*, a conference which brings together the work of artists, filmmakers and cultural critics in a series of talks, discussion and film screenings to explore the way in which hair has played an important part in the history of the Black experience. *Hair Daze* presents a diversity of

perspectives that go beyond an existentialist discourse centres on a singular notion of "good" or "bad" hair with Judith Wilson, art historian, Kobena Mercer, cultural critic, artist Sonia Boyce in conversation with Agnes Poiteving Navarre and chaired by lecturer and writer Jane Ifekwunigwe.

Arnolfini Centre Bristol autumn programme

There has been a long history of debate about the essential constituents of student empowerment[1]. Critical, radical, feminist and postmodern pedagogies have all attempted to decode the mysteries of power and seek new ways of developing knowledge that are not dependent on relations of domination and oppression. Pedagogies for empowerment have been developed in opposition to the traditional herarchical relationship between teacher and taught. In this construction, social relations are highlighted. Challenges have been conceptualised in terms of participation, interaction, dialogue and voice. There is often a simplistic equation of empowerment with giving a voice. This construction overlooks the fact that some voices can be oppressive too!

1. Morley, Louise (1998) "All you need is love: Feminist Pedagogy for Empowerment and Emotional Labour in the Academy", *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2 (1), 15-27.

LOUISE MORLEY
AUTWoman (published by the Association of University Teachers)

CONTRIBUTORS: Anon, Greg Ball, Mart Matthews, Erica McLuckie, E.J. Milner-Gullard.

£10 paid for entries

Postman Prat?

Sir,

Re: "Letter of the weak" (EYE 965). Ho! Ho! Ho! I find it deliciously ironic that my colleague "Mr Postie" of Belfast 4 has hondootedly overcooked his Christmas goose prematurely via his boorish note.

Yours festively,
ANOTHER MR POSTIE,

Bristol 6.

Let's talk rubbish

Sir,

Re: Mr Postie's letters (EYE 965). Just the time for a nice plug, but can he please make sure he leaves the tips that are surely meant for me! After all, I go to the tip more often than he does.

Yours faithfully,
MR DUSTMAN,

Address unknown.

Hard Lines

Sir,

I can't understand why Square Eyes moaned about the recent HARD NEWS special on THE CONNECTION. Admittedly it was rubbish. But then the original series was a load of old cobblers too.

Yours faithfully,
DELWYN SWINGEWOOD
(Former researcher Hard News),

London SE22.

Sour note

Sir,

Street of Shame tells us that the music critic David Fingleton, who apparently found English National Opera's BORIS GODUNOV rather tiring, has "a new job at THE TIMES". I have no idea who employs David Fingleton, but he has never been a music critic for THE TIMES, and I can confidently predict that he never will be.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD MORRISON,
Arts Editor, The Times, London E1.

That thing with the vest...

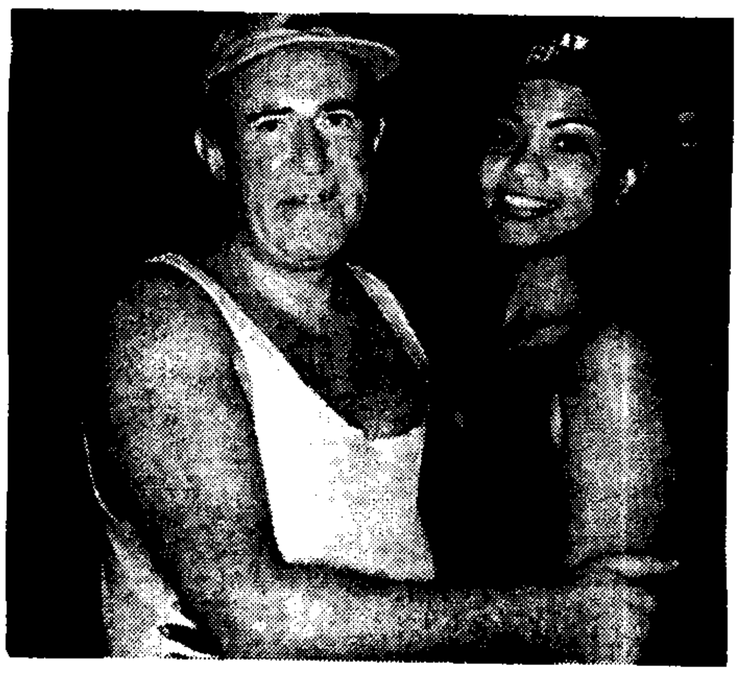
Sir,

Bookworm's quest for information on "the strange but irresistible sexual practice known as 'that thing with the cup'" is, I fear, doomed to failure. American novelist Tom Wolfe's original manuscript referred to an obscure Scottish practice known as "that thing with the ***cap****", but slipshod proofreading resulted in an unfortunate typo in his published work.*

However, I understand that you have in your archives a photograph that depicts two happy practitioners of this remarkable sexual technique. Perhaps you could publish this as a service to your readers...

Yours faithfully,
ENA B. HAVELOCK ELLIS,

London W1.



End of the peer show

Sir,

Thanks for running the fascinating Lords For Hire column (life and hereditary). It is now plain for all to see that Blair is getting rid of the wrong lot.

Yours for the right money,
ANDREW GARDNER,

Via e-mail.

Cock and bull

Sir,

While your Colour Section "feature article" on me as "right-hand man to Peter Mandelson" during the election took most of the "spin" regarding my former role at Labour, I was disappointed that you veered slightly "off message".

Despite frantic paging, you managed to spell the name of my client Koch Hightex incorrectly, as being Cock. In fact they are now known as Hightex Limited (as the Dome people will soon discover to their cost).

Hopefully in future you will be more accurate in your reporting, so as to avoid the need for any strict "whip" action, or indeed a referral to "the Enforcer" (who as we know relishes his "corrective" role).

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD ELSEN,

Deputy Head, Public Affairs, Ludgate Communications, London EC1.

*PS: Labour didn't do a U-turn on the BNRR! [Birmingham north relief road]. In fact, according to Excalibur, that great former shadow transport secretary Gavin Strang MP is on record as saying that any decision regarding BNRR would be taken after the public inquiry, which swampy and his pals lost. So, in the words of Charlie Whelan, GB's right hand man, "That's a packet of B*****s!"*

Lookalike

Lafontaine

Heath

Sir,

The antics of Germany's finance minister Oskar Lafontaine, who wants to harmonise Britain's taxes with those of Europe, should come as no surprise. The grin, the jowls and the pointed nose suggest that he is clearly related to Edward Heath, who took Britain into Europe in the first place. Should not more people be told?

More power to Lord Gnome and his organ.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN DURRANT,

Barnstaple, Devon.

Bahrain blunder

Sir,

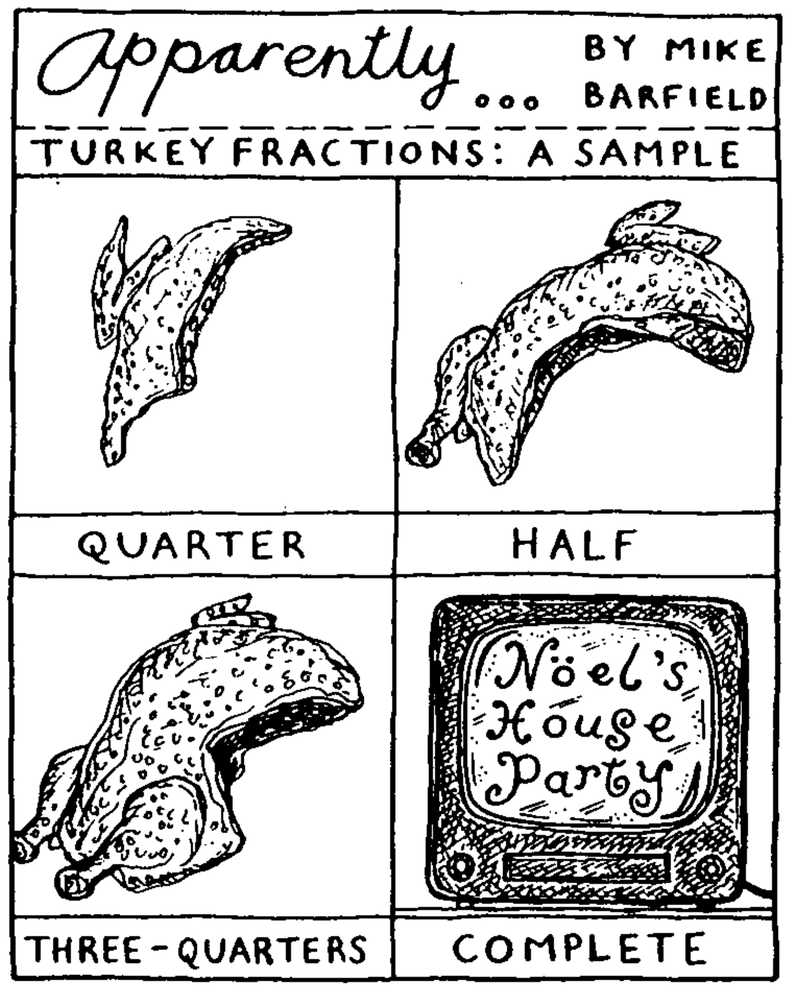
I really think that you must try a little harder to be more accurate in your reporting.

The Bahrain Society (sic) held its annual dinner at the Café Royal at which the Ambassador of Bahrain made a presentation to Sir Harold Walker, the retiring Chairman of the Society, in appreciation of his six years in that office. Sir Harold is a distinguished retired diplomat and is neither a peer, a former Labour MP nor deputy speaker of the House of Commons.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
MICHAEL RICE,

Chairman, The Bahrain Society.

● *Yes, quite right. Apologies to Lord [Harold] Walker for mistaking him for Sir Harold Walker.*



Charles Moore the merrier

Sir,

For some years I have laboured under the mis-apprehension that your organ was the leading satirical and humorous publication in the country.

Your Readerwatch on the DAILY TELEGRAPH has proved me wrong.

I have already been in touch with Mr Black to procure a subscription.

Yours,
SIMON ARBUTHNOT,

Via e-mail.

Unsuitable rhyme

Sir,

Your latest piece of Jeffrey Archer rhyming slang ("whistle and flute — shoplifting a suit") shows once again your preference for a good joke over the facts of the case.

It should, of course, have read "whistles and flutes — shoplifting three suits" (see Michael Crick's JEFFREY ARCHER: STRANGER THAN FICTION, Penguin edition, pp. 198-199).

ANDREW CONNELL,

London SW17.

Foxed

Sir,

Your account of the fiasco over Miller Freeman's fox logo (EYE 964) brings up a question that has long puzzled me. Just why is the fox considered "the farmer's worst enemy"? Rabbits eat crops, so much so that they have been subjected to biological warfare since the 1950s to reduce their numbers. Foxes eat rabbits, so why hunt them down instead of just leaving them to get on with keeping their natural prey in check?

It is true that foxes also eat chickens, but since most chickens these days are kept safely indoors in concentration camps, sorry batteries, this should not be a problem to the majority of farmers. So why the animosity towards Mr Fox? Perhaps Even Newer Muckspreader can explain?

Yours faithfully,
ROD PARKES,

Taipo, Hong Kong.

Bashing Bushell

Sir,

Re: Carol Bushell's letter. "...the SUN is eager to print the extra-marital affairs of other celebrities... no mention that Garry Bushell left his wife and three children..."

*Garry Bushell — **a celebrity**?*
In his dreams, surely?

Love and peace,
NICK POPE,

Hove, East Sussex.

I-SPY

Karlsruhe, Germany

Submitted by R. Tevendale and D. Piñan. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Windy response

Sir,

Trebles all around?! Looks like your source had at least that before he or she even got to CHICAGO's first anniversary party (In The Stalls, EYE 965). If they had been in a fit state to read their programme then they would have seen the names of Maria Friedman, Peter Davison, Diane Langton among those of thirteen NEW cast members.

But then as they say in the show:
"Give 'em the old razzle dazzle
Throw 'em a fake and a finagle
They'll never know you're just a bagel
Razzle dazzle 'em
And they'll beg you for more."

Yours faithfully and all that jazz...
DANA SHERMAN,

General Manager, Chicago The Musical, London W1.

A Dresser-ing down

Sir,

Thank you for the compliment from a magazine that must deal in more trivia than most people have had hot dinners.

Yours faithfully,
CLAIRE DRESSER
(Ariel),

Via e-mail.

PS: I bet you can't get a cup of coffee for 44p.

Porton downer

Sir,

Poor old PRIVATE EYE, slightly behind the times and a wee bit inaccurate, but hey! it makes a great little story (EYE 965, ARMS UPDATE).

First, Porton Down ceased to be "Britain's own biological warfare establishment" over 40 years ago, back in 1956.

Second, yes, zinc cadmium sulphide was the chemical sprayed over North Wales, actually over the whole country (as pointed out first by A HIGHER FORM OF KILLING, Harris and Paxman, 1982, and speedily regurgitated by the SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, 1/11/1998). However, it does not "cause lung and kidney disorders" and was widely used in Met Office weather tests by the US, Australia and Sweden, before a more efficient solution came along in 1964.

Third, Porton Down was "re-branded as the fluffy-sounding protection and life sciences division" two years ago, and it has since been re-branded as the slightly less sexy DERA Porton Down.

Fourth, the South Africans actually "revealed" that they thought they had some text books from Porton Down, but no evidence appeared. The military command, and pre-eminently the Surgeon General who made the claims were, according to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission "grossly negligent" and "made no effort to understand" the South African's CBW programme. The venerable Tom Mangold of PANORAMA could find no evidence to support the Surgeon General's claims either.

Fifth, yes again, Porton Down is working on an anti-cancer drug (covered extensively by the GUARDIAN this July) but actually it announced work on a plague vaccine back in 1995. Announcements since then have been to do with the progress of the vaccine. Are any pharmaceutical companies working on a plague vaccine?

Porton Down understands that it may be easy fodder for lazy journalists and desperate headline writers — but PRIVATE EYE? Surely not.

Faithfully,
RUPERT CAZALET,

"Porton Down spin doctor", Dera Press Office, Farnborough, Hants.

Robertson's jam

Sir,

Michael Russell of the SNP goes to great pains to convince WORLD IN ACTION, and EYE readers, that Scottish nationalism is of the cuddly, love-the-English variety (MEDIA NEWS, 11 December).

What he doesn't say is that a leading figure in his separatist party recently called England "The Great Satan". Another, at an SNP conference, gained a standing ovation for labelling defence secretary George Robertson a latter-day "Lord Haw-Haw". Shortly after his comparison with the leading Nazi traitor, Robertson received a letter bomb. And an SNP constituency party official in Aberdeen was jailed for her part in a vicious anti-English settler campaign.

Despite Mike Russell's spin, the truth is that Scottish nationalism is not at all cuddly and varies little from every other known kind of nationalism — it is simply a form of racism in everything but name.

Yours faithfully,
ALEXANDER MCKAY,

Edinburgh.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"There was a white shirted foot between Giovanni and the goal."
CLIVE TYLDESLEY, ITV
(David Stevens)

"Manchester United are substituting Blomqvist for Giggs just to bring more legs into the game."
TONY GALE, Capital Gold
(Roy Evans)

"We had already beaten them 4-0 and 7-0 earlier this season, so we knew we were in for a really tough game today."
BARRY FERGUSON, STV
(D. Horsburgh)

***James Allen**: What effect on the track will the rain have, Johnnie?*

***Johnnie Herbert**: Well, it'll make it wet.*
ITV
(D.G. Pembery)

Letter from **Luanda**

from Our Own Correspondent

IT HAS been said that Angola is one country ruled by two dictatorships. One of these dictators, our beloved president Dos Santos, has accumulated so much wealth, which he hoards in Brazilian banks, he is the 20th richest person in Brazil. Not bad for an Angolan.

Dos Santos controls his own Bermuda triangle into which disappear the millions of dollars big name oil companies give him so they can explore and drill offshore. His opposite number, UNITA guerrilla boss Jonas Savimbi, is an erstwhile chum of apartheid South Africa and the CIA. He has also been coining it for years, selling diamonds to whoever will buy them. In fact, both of these charmers have been so keen to exploit the minerals under their control they seem to have forgotten what our 20-year civil war is about.

Between 1992 and 1995 we officially had a ceasefire, during which only 500,000 or so of my fellow Angolans were killed. Peace didn't suit and we tore this up a couple of weeks ago. So what is the fighting about? Well, it's those good old natural resources, worth an estimated US$6bn a year, which make Angola fantastically wealthy in mineral terms. Miraculously, with this wealth, we still have an infant mortality rate that sees 30 percent of children die before their fifth birthday — depriving them of the chance to reach the grand old age of 42, our average life expectancy.

Around two thirds of the population live below the poverty line and have no access to health care. Fifty per cent of us wouldn't be able to read the *Danger: Land Mines* signs which may explain why 200,000 of us have been maimed by stepping on them.

The trouble is that UNITA, which generated US$3.7bn from diamonds between 1992 and 1998, has no trouble avoiding the current UN diamond embargo and will be getting a significant amount of its product on to the necks, ears and fingers of the international jet set in time for Christmas. In return, Savimbi's war chest will be brimming over with loot, so he can spend more on landmines and AK47s — also just in time for Christmas, which will be busy.

But how can this be? Surely nice, reputable western diamond dealers wouldn't flout a UN embargo? Er... if you think the airspace round Heathrow is busy, you should see the air traffic out of Angola. The air is thick with swarms of Cessnas, stuffed with diamonds and zipping off to South Africa, Namibia, Israel and the Ivory Coast.

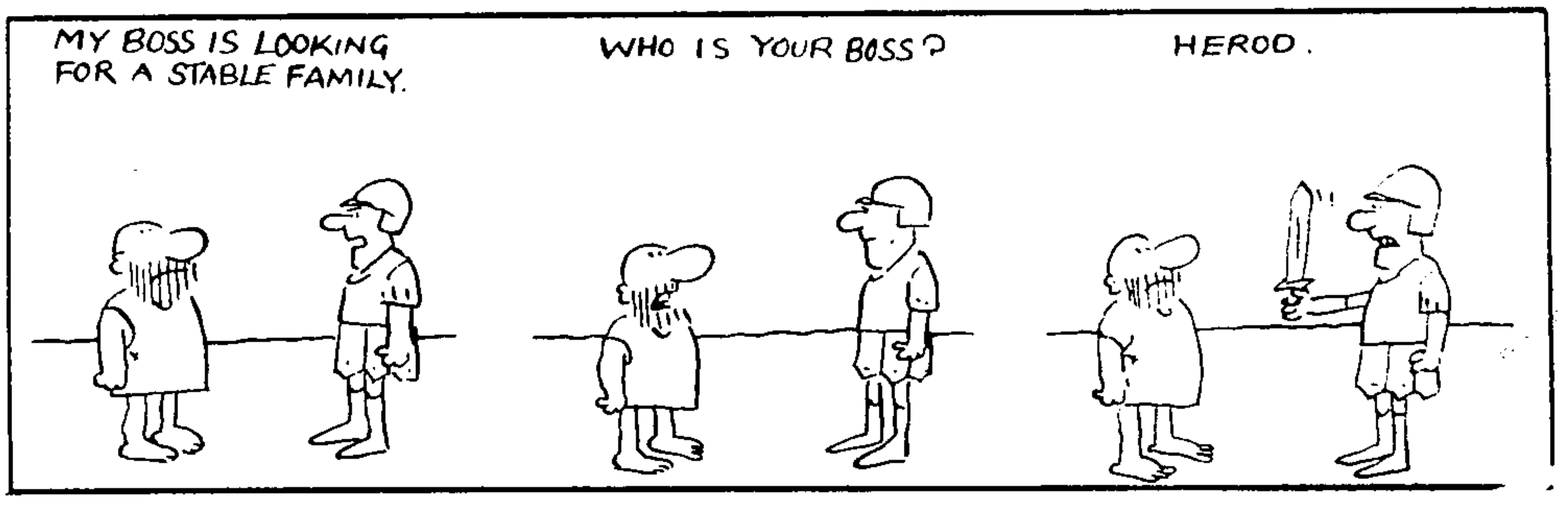
Most of the rocks eventually end up in London and Antwerp where blind eyes are turned to their source. Of course Britain's very own De Beers has a part to play in this as they buy, sell and sort around 80 percent of the world's diamonds. Our diamonds are of high gem quality and much in demand. De Beers and others say you can't tell where a diamond is from, but many gem experts say you can pin a "parcel" of diamonds down to the exact mine. But perhaps that is too much information for good business.

Under the terms of the UN embargo all countries have to report what they are doing to enforce it. But the countries with most at stake — Belgium, Namibia and South Africa — don't seem to play ball. So our gutless friends in the UN aren't much help.

The result is that we are again on the verge of war — a terrifying prospect when you think how dangerous our ceasefires are. UNITA has made 70 percent of the country unsafe and only the rich can afford to live in Luanda — beaten only by Tokyo as the most expensive city in the world. The oil and diamond industries, the arms trade and a few western powers think Angola is great. The vast majority of Angolans would probably disagree.

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Sterilising bitches is a painful and cruel operation," Percival Herman told reporters in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. "And pet bitches, whenever they are taken out on the roads by their owners, face the constant threat of unwanted penetration by diseased male mongrels. That's why we here at Animal Friends have designed the Canine Chastity Belt, for the benefit of bitches and their owners alike."

Herman, who is secretary of the animal rights group, then showed reporters how the belt was fitted. "It is easy to use, takes just a few seconds to fit, and causes no discomfort. The contraption consists of this small bowl, held in place over the bitch's vagina by leather straps tied around her back. Small holes allow her to urinate, and owners can choose from steel, copper, brass, or aluminium bowls, and leather or nylon belts. As an optional extra, you can also have these high-voltage electrified studs fitted to the belt, which act as a further deterrent to canine rapists. We have already sold 128 belts, and they only went on sale last week. Batteries are not included." *(The Asian Age 7/11/98. Spotter: Rickard de Burgh)*

—●—

● "The charges against me of drunken and dangerous driving are clearly unjust," GP Andrew Swindells told a Brisbane court, after calling himself as an expert witness in his own defence. "I happen to be a medical specialist in this matter, and shall prove that I was mentally unconscious at the time of the incident, and therefore not responsible for my own actions.

"The problem began as I was leaving a Christmas party, where I had been drinking for several days. I had intended to leave my car where I'd parked it and call a cab, but I tripped, fell, and was struck on the head by a large terracotta pot. This left me in what we doctors call an 'automatistic' state, which meant that my body began operating like a robot. I could still perform well-remembered tasks, but I was in fact mentally unconscious. This explains why I then got into my car and drove off at high speed on the wrong side of the road, straight through several red lights. You have already heard from the police that, when they arrested me, I gave them the wrong name, an incorrect address and said I'd been at work instead of at a party. That sort of amnesiac behaviour is typical of a man who is mentally unconscious, not drunk."

After listening to this expert defence testimony, magistrate Michael Halliday declared "I accept without hesitation the evidence given by the defendant with regard to his own health condition. I am fully satisfied that he was not acting voluntarily or consciously. Case dismissed." *(The Brisbane Courier-Mail, 10/10/98. Spotter: Michael Popham)*

—●—

●*"I'm building a new life for Russia underground," declared Leonid Mulyarchik as he showed reporters around the railway system he is digging beneath his house in the outskirts of Lebedyan. "I'm determined to achieve my goal, and if that means I'm a fanatic, then I'm a fanatic. If this means I'm an idiot, I'm an idiot. History will judge."*

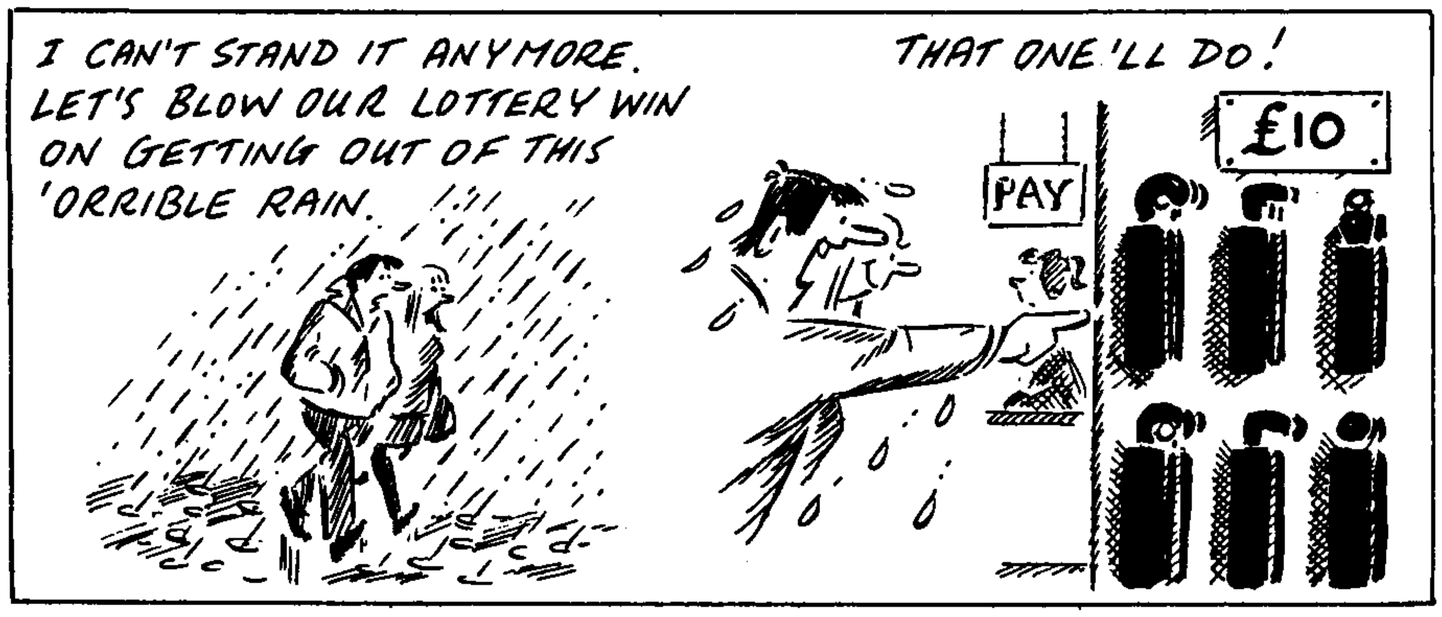
Armed with a pickaxe, a shovel, a rusty supermarket trolley, and a monthly pension of $25, sixty-four-year-old Mulyarchik intends to

construct single-handedly a complete metro system for his home town. The proposed system is modelled on the Moscow Metro (on which 75,000 workers laboured for years), but after a decade he has so far only dug 200 yards of narrow and crumbling tunnels. "This will be the main line," he beamed, pointing to a narrow tunnel which peters out in a pit of slime and sand, "and I've done some preliminary work on branch lines too. But the government hasn't paid my pension for three months, so I don't have any money yet to buy track or rolling stock."

However, local officials are scornful of his lone efforts to modernise Lebedyan's transport system. "People want bread and milk, not a senseless subway," said deputy head Vitaly Klimentsov. "Traffic congestion is hardly the town's most pressing problem. We only have one traffic light, because the main road is only used by a handful of cars, some cows, and some geese." And Mulyarchik's granddaughter said "I wish he would get a more conventional hobby, like stamp collecting." (The Wall Street Journal, 4/11/98. Spotter: Gill Westcott)

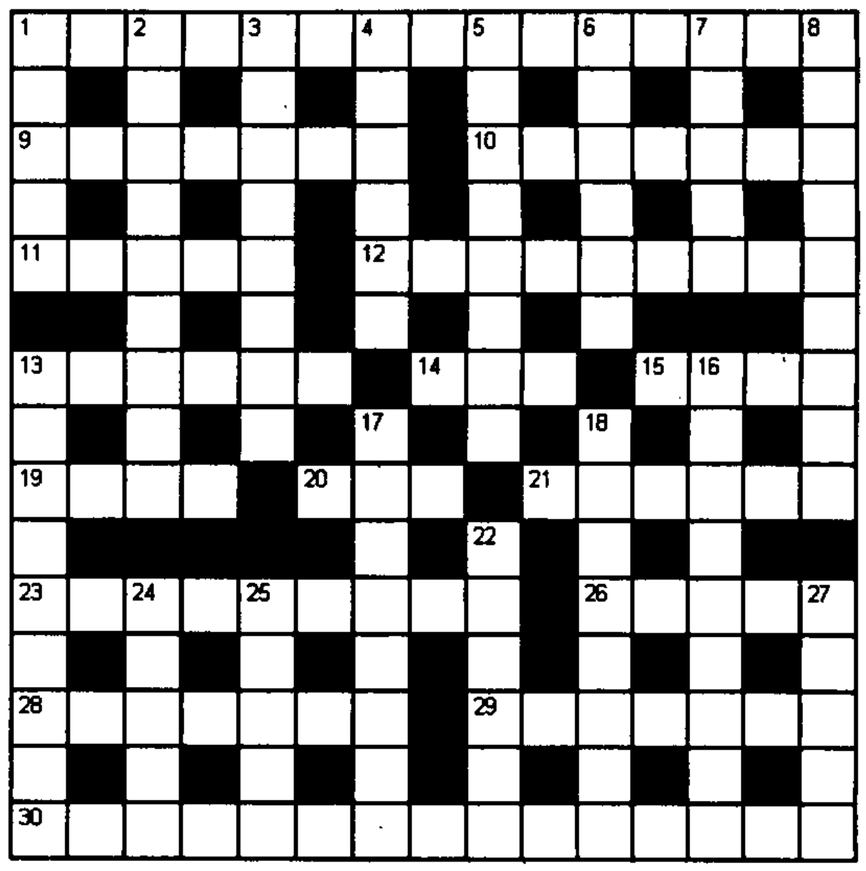
The Lottery Winners

TURNER



EYE CROSSWORD 121

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 (see 20)
9 Puts balls away to join flipping stupid conference (7)
10 Trollope novel and the account of the roasting it got? (3,4)
11 Yobby type Straw's back on rounds (5)
12 Transport to a politician (aged, some say) is a phallic symbol (5,4)
13 Getting examination material – it takes something out of a body (6)
14 Broadcaster renders Charlie's temporary refuge pointless (3)
15 His is the dyke that gets walked all over ... (4)
19 ... sounds like serial sex (4)
20/1 ac./6 Something the IRA has qualms about? Yes and no (though knees a speciality) (3,15,2,4)
21 MP finally revealed as gay, acted the sex symbol (6)
23 Fractious bunch of politicians try to pray for reform! (4,5)
26 The man among lawyers back for a brief return to normal life (5)
28 Now more a danger signal to New Labour? (3,4)
29 Leading fairy knocker, note, getting, some say, own back (7)
30 Not self-made piss-artists? A political anachronism in modern Britain? (10,5)

DOWN

1 A bit mad with a tendency to go down? (5)
2 Ruthless film conceals awful truth (3-6)
3 What angry Commons sounds like? (8)
4 Prisoner's close friend not getting it up (6)
5 Pisspoor Taki's was a sign of fascism (8)
6 (see 20)
7 State aid botched by House (5)
8 Serious crime investigators and where they eventually get laid? (9)
13 To perform fellatio requires light aid and a hot tool (4-5)
16 Can't a chef get screwed? – not bloody likely! (3,6)
17 The woman getting pissed about by Conservatives (3,5)
18 Stoop, British-style, to employ gutter press tactics? (8)
22 Having been hoisted out of bed, this is supposed to make you randy? (6)
24 Free Brenda? There's a proviso (5)
25 Embraced by both black and white, Michael finally put on stone upon stone (5)
27 Women's underwear on elite corps high-ranking officers (5)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 31.12.98.
Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye,
6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 120

Winner: MIKE EASTMAN

ACROSS: 1/12 Peace on Earth 5 Tattoos 9 Blare
10 Liberator 11/18 Christmas Rose 12 (see 1 ac.)
13 Ammunition 15/6 Cold turkey 18 (see 11) 20 Specialism
25 Corgi 26 Ian Hislop 27 Goose-step 28 (see 24)
29 Sceptre 30 Stealth.
DOWN: 1 Pubic hair 2 Anagram 3 Evensong 4 No limit
5 Tabasco 6 (see 15) 7 Ontario 8 Sarah 14 Ike
16 Damp patch 17 Patience 19 Scrooge 21 Philtre
22 Canapés 23 Illegal 24/28 Silent Night 25 CS gas.

THE BAGHDAD BLITZ

That countdown to impeachment (*surely 'Armageddon'? Ed*)

Wednesday 9.24 p.m. President Clinton has routine Middle East security briefing.

10.04 p.m. President Clintstone informed that he will be impeached the following day.

10.05 p.m. President Clingon decides to attack Iraq.

10.11 p.m. President drops trousers *(surely 'bombs'? Ed)*.

10.32 p.m. Large missile lands in intern's mouth *(surely 'top-secret Iraqi chemical weapons facility'? Ed)*.

10.46 p.m. President successfully removes threat to world peace *(surely 'DNA stain on dress'? Ed)*.

10.53 p.m. Operation successful as President still in office (Saddam).

The Daily Telegraph

HE IS one of the world's most unpleasant dictators who has undoubtedly committed acts of torture and genocide against his own people and has violated the human rights of millions.

His name has become a byword for terror and tyranny.

Therefore there can be only one response to such a monster.

Let Saddam go back to Chile and be tried by his own people if that is what the Iraqis want.

This is the only sensible solution and it is time that Mr Straw and his supporters stopped trying to extradite General Hussein and let him die with dignity underneath a Cruise missile.

LAWSON ALLEGATIONS DENIED

by Our Espionage Staff
Lunchtime 007

SENSATIONAL claims made in the House of Commons last night that Dominic Lawson, 43, is the Editor of the Sunday Telegraph were furiously denied last night by friends and colleagues.

"This is ludicrous," said one. "Are you seriously suggesting that Dominic goes into the newspaper and does some work? That's a damned lie."

Another commented, "Dominic Lawson could not possible lead a double life of the type you are suggesting. He has lunch all day at the Garrick and then goes home to the country. There is no way he could be an editor."

THE SPY THAT CAME IN FROM LUNCH

But yesterday MP Brian Sledgebore was sticking to his story.

"Conrad Black recruited Lawson when he was working at the Spectator. Lawson is highly skilled at chess and annoying people who work for him. He has a license to kill good stories and put in long pieces by himself."

Miss Moneypenny is Personal Finance Editor of the Sunday Telegraph.

NEW-LOOK QUEEN Part 94

'I WON'T USE VETO UNLESS THE OTHERS AGREE'

Blair's New Get-Tough Pledge

by Our Brussels Staff **Eur O'Booze**

PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair last night hit out at himself for claims he had made last week that he would tell the French and the Germans where to get off over their plans for a European superstate.

"Whoever said that really should grow up," he sneered. "It is obvious that the only way for Britain to get its own way in Europe is to do what everyone else says."

He also lashed out at Tory leader William Hague for his "pathetic wait and see policy" over joining the euro.

"The only sensible policy," he said, "is to wait and see."

He then announced a £5 million government information campaign to educate the public on the benefits of joining the euro.

"We shall be giving both sides of the argument," he promised.

"On the one hand, we shall present the case for the single currency, and on the other, we shall be presenting the case against the lunatics, Fascists and Little-Englanders who don't agree with us."

The Fables Of Lafontaine

No. 94 The Sun and The Wind – Which Is Stronger?

THERE was once an old German peasant whose name was Oskar.

And the Sun, the Star and the Mail had a wager to see who could make him the most upset.

First, the Sun came out and screamed, "You are the most dangerous man in all Europe."

Then the Star joined in. "You are worse than Hitler," it said.

Then it was the turn of the Mail. "Mad Kraut Oskar will put VAT on toddlers' shoes," it shouted

But Oskar took no notice, and went merrily whistling on his way.

MORAL: No one takes any notice of the tabloids, particularly Germans who can't speak English.

Advertisement

The new Robert Harris thriller

ENIGMA

WHY does a wealthy novelist living quietly in Berkshire suddenly go to London for a secret meeting with the shady Paymaster General, a man wanted by the tax authorities of 10 countries over millions of pounds given to him by a mysterious Continental widow called Roberta Maxwell?

Why does he then offer to buy the New Statesman — the most boring magazine in the world?

Is Harris working as a front man for his long-time friend, the sinister Peter M?

Is he part of an operation to eliminate the left-wing subversives who are plotting to undermine the Blair Government?

Or has he simply gone soft in the head, and decided to throw his fortune down the drain?

This is the "Enigma" at the heart of the story that everyone is talking about.

2 million copies printed. Full author promotion. Major interview in Times "News in brief" column.

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And hasn't it been warm lately? Too warm almost, since it doesn't feel like Christmas and that's very much my theme this week! We all know that Christmas is meant to be a time of peace on earth. But you know, peace doesn't mean not having wars. It doesn't mean people not fighting each other. What sort of peace is that? No, as it says in the good book, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall make war" *(The Good Cruise Bible)*.

You see, peace isn't just a matter of sitting around enjoying ourselves, watching television and eating Mr Sainsbury's excellent mince pies. Thanks, David, for the 200 you sent round to the vicarage! You see, if someone *doesn't* want peace in this world, you have to make them! Obviously, you ask them nicely first! But if they keep on refusing, then you have to warn them! And then, after you've warned them a few more times, eventually you have to give them a punch on the nose!

You see, there are times when you have to stand up to bullies and say enough is enough, you put down your beastly weapons or else!

Though, as Mrs Mowlam has shown, this clearly isn't the right approach in all places. Ireland, for example, is jolly different from the Middle East where all the stories in the Bible are set!

Now, I know some of the older people in the parish have been saying, "Why is the vicar the only one in the world to support his friend the Reverend William Jefferson Clinton, from the Church of the Seven Day Fornicators?" Well, my answer to that is that I am proud to be his friend. He calls me Tony and I call him Mr Clinton. That's the sort of relationship we have. And when I think of him I think of those moving words, "Stand by your man". "Stand by your man." That's from the devotional writings of St Tammy of Wynette.

And that means standing by him, no matter what he's done. Whether in his professional or his private life. Not that Mr Clinton has done anything wrong in his private life. As he himself has been the first to admit, he may have behaved "inappropriately". But that's hardly a sin, is it? There's no

commandment saying, "Thou shalt not commit inappropriate behaviour", is there?

And while I'm on the subject of friendship, let me thank all my good friends in the parish who have sent me such lovely Christmas cards.

I particularly liked this one from the first Mrs Cook, showing a traditional Robin surrounded by other birds.

Although I am not sure about this one from our treasurer Mr Brown, saying, "A Merry Christmas and A Not Very Prosperous New Year". I never think funny cards are very appropriate at Christmas!

And talking of not being funny or clever, I certainly don't think much of this card from young Master Hague, "I saw Mr Mandelson kissing Santa Claus".

As you know, Cherie and I've been pretty busy recently, planning our holiday and trying to find a chemist who sells suntan lotion at this time of year. So I apologise to anyone whom I may have inadvertently overlooked and not sent a card to in return — like Mr Robinson! For those who didn't get one, here it is, the Family at Christmas.

Yours

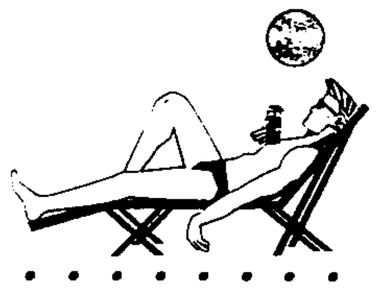
Tony

To Remember In Your Prayers

● Let us particularly remember at this time all the old people of our parish, who are struggling to make ends meet, many of them having failed to make adequate provision for their old age when they were younger. Help them to realise that it is all their own fault, and they can't rely on the church for a handout.

● Let us also remember the young people, many of whom are struggling to make ends meet, and to find jobs, even though of course there are lots of jobs.

Help these young people to invest their money wisely in a second pension, remembering the Church's teaching that we should lay up our treasure on earth *(Book of Peps 7.12)*.



Holidays. . . . . .

There will be no services in January, as Cherie and I will be taking our usual well-earned break in the Seychelles. £20,000 may seem a lot of money to come out of parish funds for a holiday, but let's not forget "It is better to receive than to give"! I think I've remembered that right!

Also, I don't want to find that people have been squabbling over who will take over while I'm away. I've made it quite clear that Mr Prescott will act as my deputy, but of course Mr Mandelson will be in charge, as normal!

Thank you both! T.B.

Notices

■ Mr Prescott asks you not to bring your cars to our midnight service, but to use public transport instead. He also wants me to remind you that there won't be any buses or trains over the Christmas holiday.

■ The Revd. Ashdown of the United Democratic Reform Church has invited us all to his party. But I've had to make it clear to him that he has to come to *our* party. I'm happy to say he's agreed.

Press Awards

BLAIR WINS "JOURNALIST OF YEAR" AWARD

by Our Media Correspondent
Sarah Shannon-Airport

THE Prime Minister Tony Blair last night presented himself with the award for writing the greatest number of articles in newspapers in the last year.

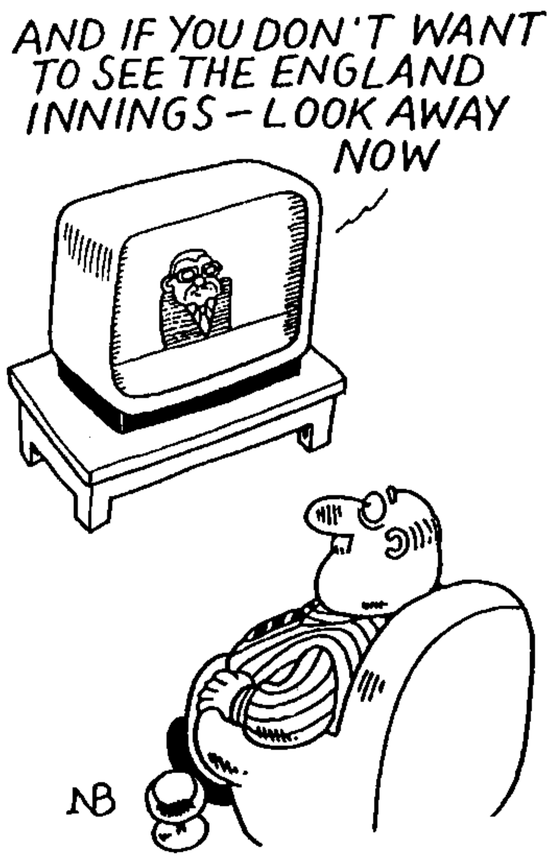
Stepping up to receive the award, Mr Blair said he would in particular like to thank Mr Alistair Campbell for writing all the articles.

Mr Blair went on, "It is a difficult job being a journalist nowadays, especially in the political field."

TONY AWARD

"There is so much competition," he went on, "particularly from myself."

Mr Blair then read out a number of favourite pieces by himself, including "Why We Will Not Join The Euro" (the Sun), "Why Britain Must Join The Euro" (Der Telegraaf), "What My Third Way Really Means" (The Times), "Why I Love Geri From The Spice Girls" (the Daily Telegraph) and "Why The Stratoblaster Guitar Is The Most Important Contribution To Human Civilisation In The Past 2000 Years".



TELEVISION SPORTS PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR

Lynam: ...and finally, we come to the person who viewers saw as the single most dominant figure in British televised sport during 1998... just a minute whilst I open the envelope...

Roll of the drums

Lynam: ...and this year's winner is... Rupert Murdoch! Congratulations — let's have a look at just some of the great moments he sold you, courtesy of us here at the BBC...

Endless footage of Premiership football, rugby union, rugby league, cricket, boxing, etc — pictures courtesy of Sky Sport.

Introducing A New Columnist

Kevin "Foxy" Spart, Strategy Co-Ordinator of the Provisional Wing of the Total Animal Rights Liberation Army

THE human-dominated media have totally predictably tried to discredit the heroic hunger strike of comrade Barry Horne, ie the suggestion that he was secretly eating beef-burgers during his 62-day hunger strike, which he only called off when the Government totally caved in and agreed to set up a total review of all meat-eating practices and animal experimentation against animals, er, and a general amnesty for all those political prisoners convicted of legitimately trying to kill human beings in pursuit of a better life for all animals, er, regrettably this news will come too late to save the millions of turkeys which have been subjected to mass-genocide without trial, which not even General Pinochet ***(cont'd. Gas Mark 94)***

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Lord "Lew" Grade,
TV Mogul and Winner of the 1926 World Charleston Competition

So. Farewell then
Lord Grade.

With your bulky frame
And large cigar
You epitomised
The world of showbusiness.

It was you who gave us
The Saint, Crossroads and
The Muppet Show.

Now you have reached
Life's Crossroads
And you may become a
Saint.

(Or perhaps a
Muppet.)

E.J. Kermit the Thribb (17½)

MELTON Historical Society members heard a talk by Valerie Tedder about her book The Pantry Under the Stairs – not The Panty Under the Stairs as reported in Club Corner last week.

Melton Times

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

THE OFFICE PARTY
WERE FROM ACCOUNTS AND WE DON'T CARE IF YOU ARE CHAIRMAN WE THINK YOU ARE A COMPLETE PRICK!
HAVE YOU ANY OLD KNICKERS YOU DON'T WANT MISS POTTS?
NO! I DON'T SMOKE ANY MORE, AND WOW! DO I FEEL FIT! MIND YOU I DON'T MIND OTHER PEOPLE SMOKING....
MY PARTNER AND I HAVE A GREAT TIME, HE LOVES OLD MOVIES AND SO DO I, AND WE HAVE LOTS OF FRIENDS. MIND YOU I'M NOT INTO FISTING...
THUD! THUD! THUD! THUD! THUD! AWAY IN A MANGER
COULD BE GAY
WE CAN PICK UP OVER 400 CHANNELS THE KIDS LOVE IT, AND YOU CAN DO ALL YOUR BANKING 24 HOURS...
NICE ONE!
I'M ON THE TRAIN
I WANT TO DIE
YOU SAID YOU LOVED ME WHEN WE SLEPT TOGETHER! YOU SAID YOU'D LEAVE YOUR WIFE!
YES, I KNOW I DID BUT I'VE GOT TWO KIDS...
LOOK I'LL TELL MY WIFE ABOUT US AFTER CHRISTMAS!! CAN'T TELL HER NOW GOT SHES PLU...
HEATH

THATCHER CALLS FOR RELEASE OF 'FRIEND OF BRITAIN'

by Our Political Staff
Boorish Johnson

LADY THATCHER last night made a personal plea on behalf of the so-called Purley Dictator who is under arrest charged with crimes against humanity (his neighbour Ron Bonkers).

The man is better known as Augusto Bernardo Ingham who for many years terrorised innocent journalists and opposition politicians when he held the post of Generalissimo of the notorious British ruling junta of the '70s and '80s.

ST BERNARD

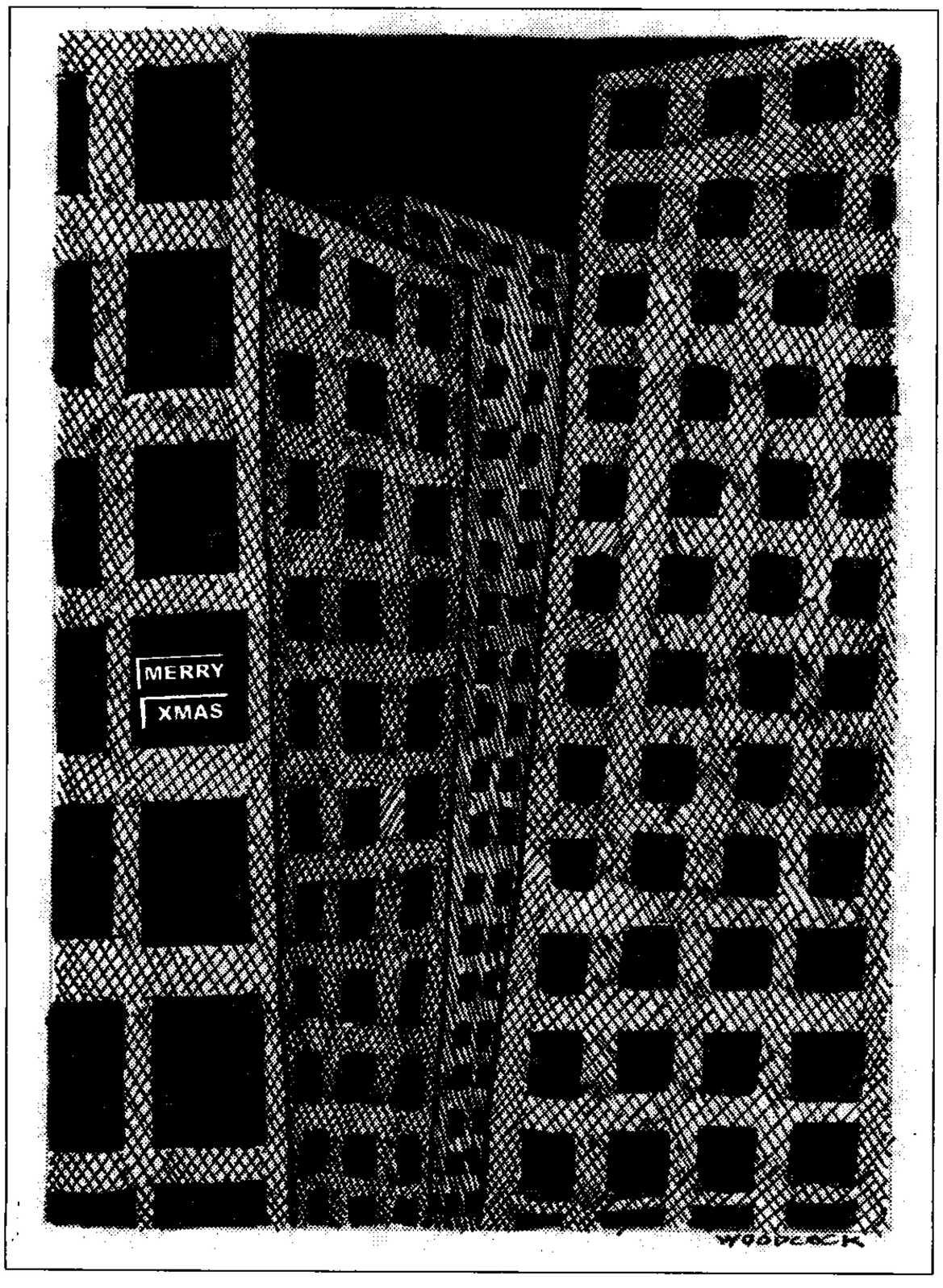
Recalling those dark days, one journalist said, "He was brutal, foul-mouthed and dangerous. No one was safe from his attacks. Frankly, I have no sympathy for him now. I hope he rots in jail."

But Baroness Thatcher refused to accept the charges against her old friend.

"He may have been a bit extreme, but he acted only in the interest of his country. We could not have won the Falklands without me... I mean him. To suggest that he is guilty of atrocities against his neighbour's Mercedes is plainly ludicrous. If he goes to jail, who will be next?"

TURNED CHILE

Today the world held its breath as in the leafy suburb of Purley in Essex, the infamous attacker of innocent cars waited for the knock on the door from PC Wibble that will seal his fate.



TV

CHRISTMAS FILMS
Six to miss

Boxing Day Holiday Saturday

3.30pm BBC1 **The Prince of Egypt:** TV premiere of new Disney animated blockbuster which retells the classic story of Prince Al-Fayed who emerged from the hovels of Alexandria to lead his people into the land of milk and honey (the Harrods Food Hall). Thrill to the climactic battle where Fayed escapes the pursuing hosts of Lonrho, by building a pontoon bridge over the Red Sea with millions of unsold copies of the humorous magazine Punch.

Christmas Holiday Sunday

10.15am Sky Movies **The Lewinsky File:** Highly implausible Washington thriller, based on the novel by John Grisham, in which a Southern U.S. President is brought down after a secret liaison with a mysterious brunette known only as "Shallow Throat". Starring Michael Douglas, Sharon Stone and Danny de Vito as Prosecutor Starr.

Christmas Holiday Monday

8.15am Eurosport **They Flew From Bruges:** Long-forgotten Ealing comedy where a group of West Country eccentrics declare independence from the European Union and set up the breakaway state of Euro-sceptia, under the leadership of Sir Herbert Gusset (Alistair Sim), Brigadier "Buffy" Frobisher (Wilfred Hyde-White) and the formidable Lady Gusset (Margaret Rutherford). Watch out for wonderful cameo from Stanley Holloway, as pub landlord Monty Balon.

New Year's Eve Tuesday

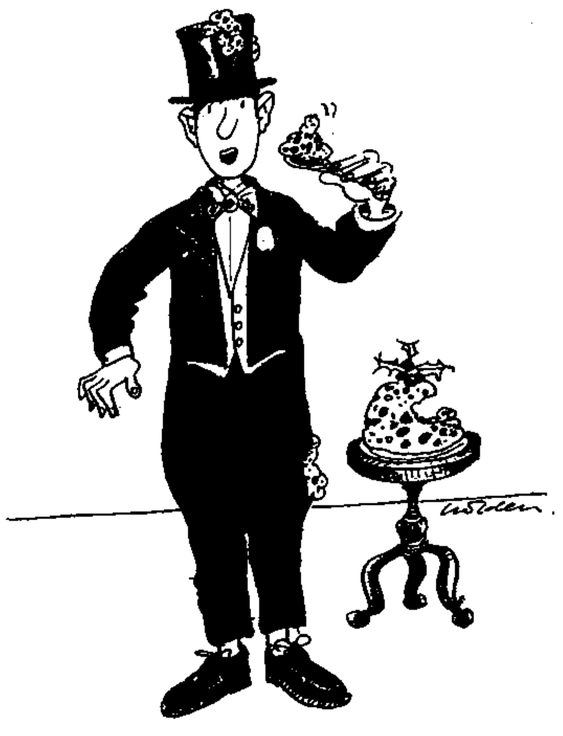
9.00pm Channel 5 **Titanic:** Made for TV re-make of 1998 classic, in which Emma Noble and James Major recreate the original Kate Winslet-Leonardo DiCaprio roles. Watch out for surprise happy ending as the ship fails to sink!

New Year's Day Holiday Wednesday

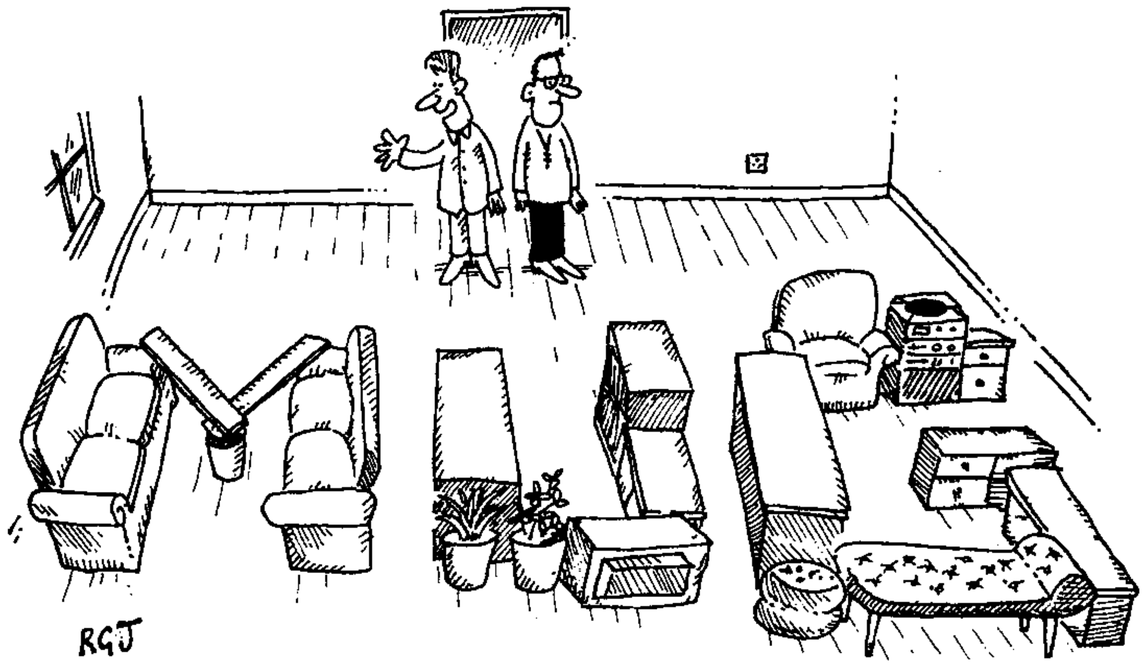
3.15am BBC2 **Gordon Brown's Schooldays:** Heartwarming 1933 b/w classic based on well-loved Victorian novel. Settle down once again for a good weep at the story of the young Scottish lad who can't add up. Starring the young Gordon Jackson as "Wee Brownie" and Joan Greenwood as his childhood sweetheart Sarah Macaulay.

New Year Bank Holiday Thursday

Channel 4: Long-awaited TV premiere of "the most successful British film of 1997" ***Four Funerals And A Murder***, in which a group of young unemployed Glaswegian heroin addicts gradually die of boredom while watching a new British film on television and then murder the producer. ***"Brilliant"*** *Time Out.*



"Pudding on my top hat...
Pudding on my white tie...
Pudding on my tails..."



"I paid some Feng Shui consultants a fortune to redesign my furniture layout"

The Eye's Exciting New Columnist!!

DECISIONS, decisions. Do I send Christmas cards to people just because they've sent them to me?

Do I get the turkey from M&S or Sainsbury's? M&S are better, but Sainsbury's is nearer.

And what about mince pies? Do we have to have them, just because Simon's mother's coming?

He's been no use, as you can imagine, after his office party when he nearly threw up in the taxi home.

He claimed it was food poisoning. Men, they're all hypochondriacs, or drunks, or both.

I left a note for him this morning telling him to tell the nanny to buy the turkey.

She was going to go back to Croatia for Christmas, but we had to put our foot down. Or I did. Simon, as you can imagine, was useless.

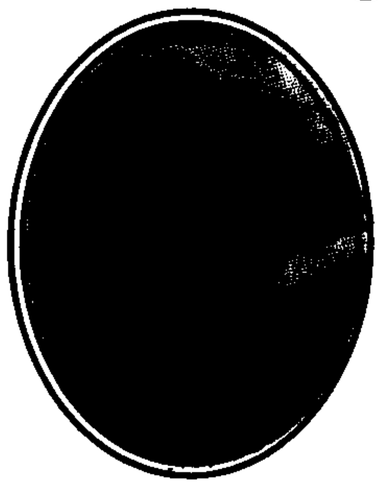
It's time I got a new partner. But not before Christmas. There's too much to do. And someone's got to look after the baby while the nanny does the Christmas shopping.

At least I've taken one big decision. The Christmas cards. I'm not going to bother sending any.

Simon can do them if he wants to. He could do them in front of the football, if he's not too drunk.

© *All newspapers.*

Wedding Of The Century



How They Are Related

Frank Johnson

Dr Samuel Johnson
Lexicographer and contributor to "Ye Weeklie Spectator and Coffee House Gazette"

Dr Paul Johnson
Editor "Ye Voyeur (incorporating Spanker's Weekly)"

Sir Boorish Johnson
Columnist on Daily Hellograph

Brian "Jonners" Johnson
Editor of "Ye Wisden's Almanac (incorporating Cakes and Cakemen)

Frank Bruno
Editor at time of press of The Spectacularly Boring

Virginia Fraser

Lord Lovaduck of That Ilk
14th Laird of Lard and Chief of the Glenmorangie Clan

Lord Fraser of Lovaduck
15th Bannock of Burn

Lady Antonia Fraser
World-famous wife of Dame Harold Pinter

Lady Virginia Bottomley
Famous wife of little-known MP Horatio Bottomley

Lady Virginia Water
Well-known Home Counties golf club

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wither Popular Music?

From Sir Lloyd-Webber and Sir Tim Rice

Sir, It has come to our attention that the record industry is presently selling cleverly packaged, mass-produced dross, and getting rich on the proceeds. This cynical commercialism is clearly an affront to artists such as ourselves — especially seeing as *we* thought of it in the first place. Such is our anger and resentment towards the world of music and entertainment, we are sadly forced to make a decision which I know is bound to prove unpopular with the majority of music lovers — we're going to write another one of those musicals.

Yours faithfully,
SIR LLOYD-WEBBER
SIR TIM RICE
C/o The Really Useless Group

LATE NEWS

MAN WHO SMOKED BIG CIGARS DIES

AN OLD man who smoked big cigars has died.

A colleague paid tribute to the man, saying "He was big in every way — especially his big cigar, which dwarfed every other cigar I've ever encountered in showbusiness. I remember once, his cigar had become small as a result of him having smoked it. He turned to me and said, 'I've finished this one — get me another of my big cigars, and that lighter over there on the table.' — Great days." (Reuters)

Yobs
HUSBAND
Santa, this is my little brother Tim
Hello Tim
I want a Playstation and a mountain bike
OK.
Word of warning Santa, if they're not there Christmas morning you're dead
SANTA'S GROTTO

GNOME XMAS NEW YEAR SALE

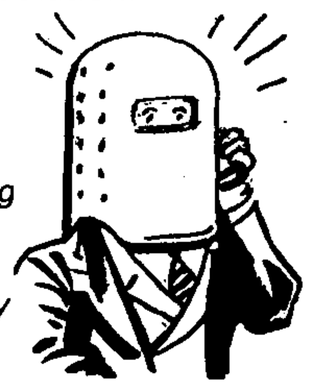
MOBILE PHONE LOVERS!

Say Goodbye to Cancer Scare Misery with the new

SHIELD-O-PHONE

Industrial standard lead shield fits neatly over your head and upper torso to provide genuine protection from dangerous radiation.

Approved by TV's Delia Smith



Weight: 160kg

WARNING: *May affect sound quality on some phones.*

Price: £399.99 *Colours: Lead*

GENUINE TITANIC SOUVENIR!

Exclusive to GnomeMart — this incredible memento of the world's greatest maritime disaster, the sinking of RMS Titanic.

- Own a piece of history to pass on to your children and to their children's children.
- 100% guaranteed seawater taken from the ocean in which the Titanic sank. Your Titanic memento comes with a certificate of authenticity signed by top oceanologist **Delia Smith.**

Price: 2p per bottle *(limited edition of 10 million gallons)*

The Lucky Stone of VORDEMAN

FOR centuries the miners of Bohemia's Vordemanian mountains have dug deep into the ground in search of one of the rarest minerals on earth — the priceless Vordeman Stones.

Those lucky enough to possess the Stone, it is said, will be made wealthy beyond their wildest dreams!

Now you can share in the Luck of the Vordemans!

Price: 2p (box of 80 stones) plus p&p

Says TV's Carol: *"I'm so lucky — not only have I been given £5 million but someone gave me Delia Smith's book for Christmas!"*

(actual size)

LADS!

Impress your flatmates with the authentic

CD-ROMP

THIS exciting hour-long CD of genuine sex sounds is guaranteed to convince any listeners that you are one hell-luva stud — and not a sad act reading a copy of *Loaded* in your room!

From **Price: £342.75**

The Erotic CD Society

(Editor Rowan Yelling)

"Makes my soufflé rise!" says D.S. from White City.

Animal Lovers!

Why should Fido or Felix miss out on the family pizza experience?

Now they won't with new

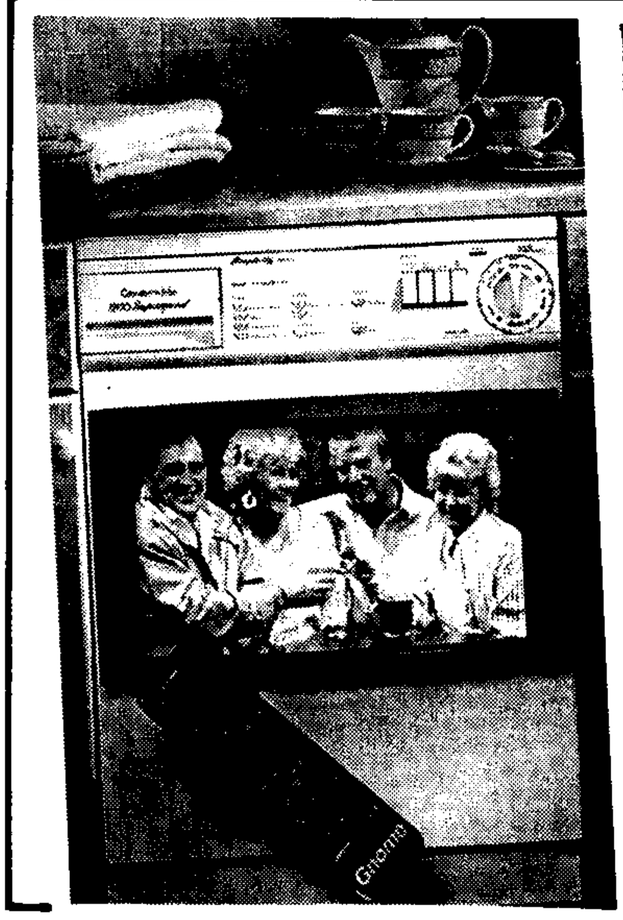
PEZZAS™

- *Just pop "Pezzas" in the microwave and PING! and watch the tails of your four-legged friends go waggin'!*

Choose from these delicious toppings: ***Shrimp 'n' Kangaroo; Tuna 'n' Donkey; Dolphin 'n' Horse; Postman's Leg.***

Price: £1.99 for packet of six.

Top TV Cook ***Delia Smith's*** *cat says: "M-m-m-mlaow!"*



LAUNDRY LOVERS!

THE NICAM DIGITAL WIDESCREEN

WASHING MACHINE™

Makes washing day like a visit to the cinema!

No more sitting around watching your smalls in the suds! Now you can view your favourite TV 'n' films instead in full-colour Cinemascope 3D glory with Sensurround Dolby sound.

Screen size: 62 inch, 86 inch, 94 inch. ***Price: £4,999.99***

Plays theme tune from TV's Countdown — "My favourite programme," says **Delia S.**

PastGnomes

Price £17.34

THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN KLEENEX-HOLDER

MODELLED on the original in the British Museum, this incredible historical artefact comes complete with 100 sheets of dried-papyrus-style tissue. Named after the Egyptian God of Sneezing.

Plays theme tune from ♪ *The Life of Birds.* ♪

"When peeling onions I would not be without it" says TV's **Delia Smith**

Say Goodbye To Millennium Bug Fears With The **Trouser Press 2000**

Belgian scientists have been working round the clock to find a solution to the Millennium's most worrying problem — what happens if your trousers are trapped in their press at midnight on December 31st 1999.

Rest assured that thanks to this miracle of bug free microchip technology you will be wearing a crisply-creased pair of your favourite trousers to greet the new Millennium.

Price: £7,921 *(batteries extra)*

Plays theme tune from TV's "Fast Show"

Terrify your Vicar this Christmas with the

PETER TATCHELL HORROR MASK

THIS latex lookalike will guarantee hours of fun as you stand in the congregation and your vicar thinks he is going to be outed!

He will be screaming and so will you!

Price: £18.60

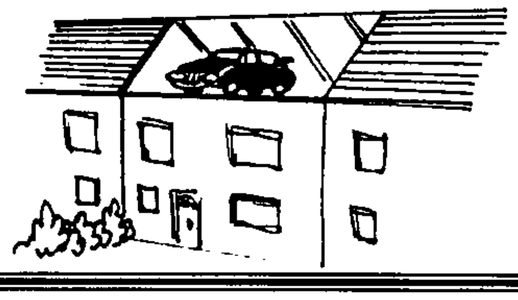
Sick of having your car broken into or stolen?

No longer with the

CARPORT ROOF CONVERSION™

Your neighbours won't believe it when they see your Nissan sitting where your cold water tank used to be — out of burglars' way! Price: £1 million

TV's Nick Ross says: "Always grease the pan first before adding the egg." *(Shurely 'This is a breakthrough in Autotheft prevention'? Ed.)*



Say Goodbye to Toast Sweat Misery with new

DE-TOAST-ORANT™

SCIENTISTS have found that Toast-Sweat can ruin china plates, porcelain dishes and metal toast racks, not to mention making unsightly sweat patches on fabric tablecloths.

Now you can spray on the amazing "De-Toast-Orant" and hey presto, toast is dry all day long! Also comes in roll-on form.

FRAGRANCES: Pine, Lavender and Burnt Toast

Price: 26p per can.

"Perfect sweat-free toast every time!" **D. Smith**

MAIL MART

The World's First Interactive Socks

A technological miracle from Romania spells the end of lost sock misery!

Simply get up and ask your socks where they are. The interactive socks immediately reply "We're here" and give detailed directions to their location PLUS time check, weather update and lottery winner numbers.

Intel chip operated, no batteries required.

Plays theme tune from TV's Cold Feet.

Price: £375.35 per pair.

TV's Carol Smillie says: "If I were Delia Smith, I'd wear nothing else!"

Latest Novelty from Japan

THE GIANT BONSAI TREE

OVER 150 feet tall, this is the world's largest Bonsai Tree, and has been specially genetically modified by master Bonsai Biologist Simon Le Bonsai.

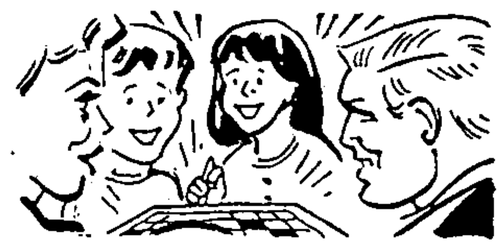
Ideal for very large garden or nearby forest — all the fragile delicacy of the traditional Bonsai, only 1000 times bigger.

PRICE: 6 million yen for packet of seeds (1)

"The leaves make a delicious salad," says top sushi chef **Dee Lia**.

New Board Game For Xmas

Blind Trust



Hilarious family game as you try and guess who has hidden their money from everyone else!

Who is going to be the Paymaster General? Who is going to live in the Channel Islands? Who will play the mysterious Madame Legovaire from Belgium?

Don't Blind Trust anyone when you play this gripping novelty game! Price: ~~£24.99~~

PICNIC LOVERS!

The FENG SHUI PICNIC BOOK

HOW many picnics have been ruined by careless placement of rug, paper plates and tupperware boxes?

The FENG SHUI PICNIC BOOK *(with introduction by Delia Smith)* explains in 12 simple to follow steps how to gain the maximum pleasure from your Al-Fresco Eating experience.

No more unwanted ants, worrisome wasps, or crumbs-on-blanket misery!

Price: £2.99

As seen at THE FENG SHUI SHOW 1998 at Toronto's Expo Centre

KIDZ!

THE VIRTUAL YO-YO

NEW from Belize, the latest synthesis of computer-generated reality and yo-yo technology.

Simply put on the digital headset and glove, plug into an IBM 7000 S2 Atlas mainframe — and you can be a Yo-Yo Wizard!

Amaze your virtual friends with your yo-yo prowess!

Virtual Yo-Yos come in the following colours: Robson Green, Blue Peter, Simply Red. *Price: £25,372.99*

***No more tiresome in-cab conversation with the amazing* TAXI-TAPE™**

When boring cabbie starts to talk, your voice-activated personal recorder immediately says: "Yes... dead right... string 'em up... are you sure this is the way to Heathrow?" 20-minute loop for extra snooze time.

Choice of voices: **Richard Briers, Rolf Harris, Delia Smith.**

Price: £9.95 + tip

*** BACK SUFFERERS!**

THE ORTHOPAEDIC UPRIGHT BED

***"80% of people suffer from severe lumbar pain and cannot lie down to sleep," says TV Doctor Delia Smith** (shurely 'Dr Tom Stuttaford'? Ed)*

Now with the Vertical Bed all pressure is removed and the patient enjoys a full night's sleep standing up!

Price: £999.95. Direct from the internationally renowned "World of Backs" in Swindon

Plays theme tune from Radio 4's "Feedback"

Environmentalists!

New from Highgrove

Royal Organic Pesticide

DEVELOPED by top scientist Prince Charles, this revolutionary plant-friendly pesticide is made by Mother Nature herself.

St Egbert's Charm (Di-Acido-Benzo-Nucleic-Strichno-Phosphate) is guaranteed to destroy all living organisms in your garden. Price £175 per tonne.

WARNING: Do not use near grass, flowers, trees, pets, children etc.

Delia Smith says: *"St Egbert's Soup is a must for any dinner party!"*

At last from Zimbabwe

THE MICRO-JAMA

Incredible thermo-conductive pyjamas made from 100% Gnomelon™ ensure that you will never again feel that brrr-cold-sheet chill when you get into bed!

Just put "Micro-Jama" into your microwave for 30 seconds and your favourite pyjamas are piping hot!

(WARNING: unsafe for elderly, middle-aged or young people)

Colours: Charcoal, Ash, Burnt Sienna, Black. **Price: £2.99 per pair.**

Recommended by Lord Cranborne, the well-known peer

Stop curious kiddies from spoiling Santa's big day with

OUCH! ™

■ INVISIBLE laser force field puts an electric ring of defence around the bottom of your Christmas tree to stop prying fingers opening presents early!

When toddler tries to prod his pressies — ZAP! he gets a 3500-volt warning which sends him back to his bedroom in no time at all!

Price: £11,750

*(WARNING: "Keep away from children," says TV's **Delia Smith**)*

DIARY

PAUL THEROUX'S HAPPY NEW YEAR

I remember one Christmas with particular pleasure. I was on Cape Cod with my family and a close friend, Princess Margaret, who was at that time sister to the Queen of England.

It was an extraordinary three days. On Christmas Eve, Santa Claus appeared and distributed presents to the children. He struck me then as a warm-hearted, rosy-faced fellow whose capacity for generosity seemed boundless.

On Christmas Day, while the family were all roasting chestnuts around the warm glow of the log fire, I escorted Princess Margaret outside. Noticing the unashamed convexity of her tremulous breasts, I took her again and again behind the coal shed until she squealed with pleasure and howled for more. Like any great writer, for me it's the little details that are so telling. At one point her diamond coronet wobbled slightly on her head from the thrill of it all, and for that moment she forgot she wasn't Queen.

On Boxing Day, I began to revise my opinion of Santa Claus. I started to realise that in fact he was not a nice person at all, but a cold-hearted overweight has-been with the liverish complexion of a confirmed alcoholic and no true feelings for children beyond the predatory. And what had he written? Pah! The odd carol maybe, but nothing that would last. Meanwhile, I had written anything up to fifteen travel books, thirty novels, six memoirs and twelve books of literary criticism — without even trying! No wonder that when he looked at me his eyes glowed with such unseasonal envy.

In England for New Year, I had a day to spare so in the morning I took the underground train from Westminster to Sloane Square and in the afternoon I wrote a book about it.

As I boarded the train at Westminster, I noticed that everyone apart from me was squat and ugly and dishevelled and grimy. The English have never recovered from their loss of Empire, and their faces and bodies have become raddled with self-pity as a result. Among them I felt an alien: I sensed their eyes glaring at me with undeserved contempt. No one spoke a word to me as the train rattled along. Instead, they buried their heads in their newspapers, pretending to read as they plotted ways to kill me. I knew from their sullen silence that they would like me to fall beneath the wheels of the train. Only then would they smile. I had lived in England for thirty-five years, but never once had I felt any warmth.

The next stop was St James's Park. Opposite me sat a statuesque Masai woman, her body made sleek and strong by her daily hunts for wildebeest in the foothills of the Serengetti, her voluminous breasts swaying gently in the winter breeze. I asked her whether this was the Circle Line, and before the train had set off she had placed her hunting spear to one side and was howling eagerly in the ecstasy of sex like an addict injected, and her eyes rolled up in her skull and she stared, still howling, with big white eyes like a blind zombie that sees everything. "Paul! Paul!" she cried — she must have read my name off my clutchbag — "You are not only a great writer, much better than the overrated V.S. Naipaul, for instance — but you are *all man!!*" Afterwards, limp and sleepy, stupefied by sex, she confirmed that, yes, this was the Circle Line. As the train drew into Westminster, she rose to leave.

I never saw her again. I now realise that I never really liked her anyway and I bet she couldn't get a piece into the New Yorker even if she really tried.

Few readers realise that no one has ever attempted a paragraph exactly like this in the whole history of English literature. Dickens and Hardy both wrote paragraphs, yes, but they didn't contain exactly these words. Ditto James, Fielding, Melville, Waugh, Fitzgerald, Borges and even Shakespeare. They might have aimed for it, but their time and their talent was against them. Naipaul? Nowhere near. So what I am doing in this paragraph — starting with the word "Few", then going on for precisely 101 words, ending with the word "Enjoy" — is utterly unique in the annals of letters, comparable in brilliance only with itself. *Enjoy.*

The duty of every artist is to the truth, and to the truth alone. That is what separates him from the rest of mankind, who fill their days with half-truths, evasions, fibs and lies. I learnt the importance of truth on New Year's Day over half a lifetime ago. I was travelling to the peak of Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing. As I was pulling the two of them up the last few feet, I surveyed the mountain-tops below me, all swathed in cloud. "I am now on top of the world" I thought, "Truth is my only friend."

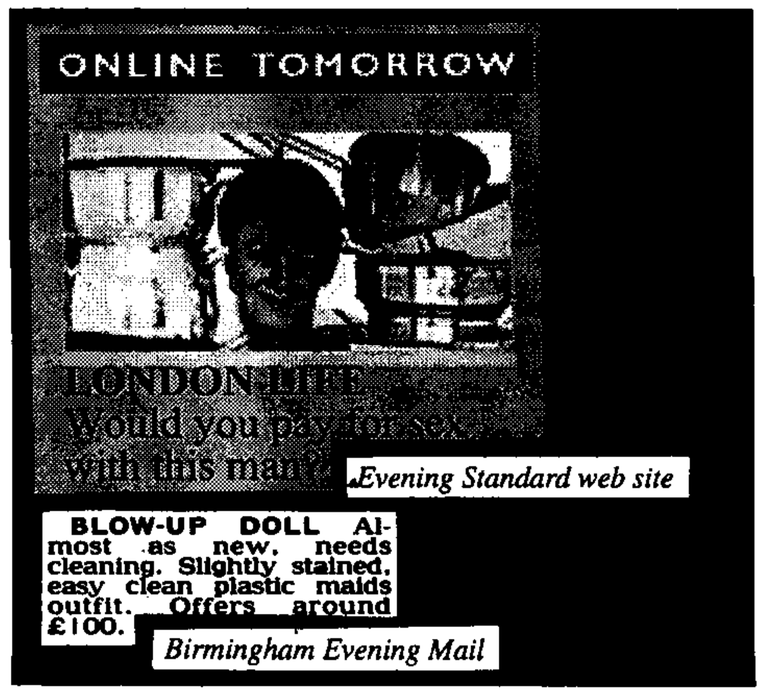
At that point, the English aristocrat Lady Antonia Fraser appeared beside me in a straw hat carrying a picnic basket. She was wearing a shimmering cotton dress of floral design, the top four buttons open to the bracing air, exposing the upper swell of her bountiful breasts.

Looking down, I checked that Sir Edmund and Sherpa Tensing were still struggling uphill on their ice-skates. They would be a good few minutes yet. I congratulated Lady Antonia on her "Mary Queen of Scots" and with a flicker of her eyelashes she congratulated me for being much, much more intelligent than V.S. Naipaul. Then Lady Antonia removed all her clothes, placed her straw hat neatly on the picnic-basket and lay writhing in the warm embrace of the gently yielding snow screaming "Take me! Take me, you great big hunk of a tormented yet strangely accessible and darkly comic American writer, you!" There was something in her posture that aroused me. During sex, she squeaked with pleasure like a field mouse, scampering this way and that, her legs a-quiver, her nose twitching in ecstasy. When it was over, she beseeched me for more, but I told her I had to give a hand to Hillary and Tensing. Looking down at them, I noticed their eyes were filled with ill-disguised resentment at me for having reached the top first, and then having taken Lady Antonia. I knew then that, like everyone else in the world, they would never acknowledge my achievements. Some people are so self-absorbed they just can't face up to the truth — but that's human beings for you.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

DIS YEAR I MOVED TO A NEW FASHION HOUSE....
....BUT NEX YEAR I WANNA MAKE A DRESS OUT OF A HOUSE..
AT 3PM ON CHRISTMAS DAY, FASHION EDITORS AND STYLISTS ALL OVER BRITAIN SETTLE DOWN TO WATCH McQUEEN'S SPEECH


ONLINE TOMORROW
LONDON LIFE
Would you pay for sex with this man?
Evening Standard web site
BLOW-UP DOLL Almost as new, needs cleaning. Slightly stained, easy clean plastic maids outfit. Offers around £100.
Birmingham Evening Mail

Literary Review

Yule Log-Rolling

THIS year, as usual, few authors or reviewers will be sending Christmas cards. Why bother, when you can exchange seasonal greetings via the "Books of the Year" features — and be paid for doing it?

In the *New Statesman* veteran hack Godfrey Hodgson raved over *Secrecy*, the "compelling essay" by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, without mentioning that he is currently writing Moynihan's authorised biography.

Another old lag, Anthony Howard, gave an absurd puff for *Buster's Diaries* by his crony Roy Hattersley, while also finding space to namecheck his former *protégé* from the *Observer*, Robert Harris. Jeremy Paxman in the *Sunday Telegraph* agreed that "my friend Robert Harris's *Archangel* was the best thriller for years". Other *Archangel* fans included Peter Mandelson, who is godfather to one of Harris's children, and Orlando Figes, who gave Harris historical advice on Russia.

Another member of the Berkshire/Oxfordshire set, John Mortimer, advised *Independent on Sunday* readers to buy *The English*, by his friend and neighbour Jeremy Paxman. In the *Mail*, however, Rumpole chose *Altar Ego* by the Australian novelist Kathy Lette — who is married to Mortimer's old barrister chum Geoffrey Robertson QC. Showing a fine grasp of correct English etiquette, Lette returned the compliment in the *Observer*: "In the great tradition of the English social and political novel comes John Mortimer's *A Sound of Trumpets*. His is the authentic voice of the new semi-detached English middle class." High praise indeed.

"A heart-warming triumph for both author and Love" was how Kazuo Ishiguro (in the *Sunday Times*) described *My Year Off*, an extended sicknote written by Robert McCrum, who was until recently Ishiguro's publisher at Faber. "*My Year Off* by Robert McCrum moved me greatly," Justin Cartwright echoed in the *Observer* — whose literary editor is the selfsame Robert McCrum.

One good turn deserves another, and every gift deserves a thank-you letter. A few years ago the Oxford don Lyndall Gordon praised one of Joan Smith's novels; this year Smith, in the *Sindie*, praised Gordon's *Private Life of Henry James*. Philip Hensher has written extravagant encomia to Barbara Trapido's last two novels, so it is no surprise to learn, again in the *Sindie*, that Hensher's *Pleasured* had Trapido "dancing on the Autobahn".

John Humphrys tried the pre-emptive approach when explaining in the *Sunday Telegraph* why he had chosen BBC colleague John Simpson's memoirs *Strange Places, Questionable People*: "1. He's a very good friend of mine and what's the world coming to if you can't plug your friends' books? 2. I'm about to publish a book of my own and he'll have to be kind to me in return. 3. It's a damn good read." In *The Times*, Humphrys came up with another reason for choosing this ludicrously vain book: "Simpson has a sense of humour and he writes well." Yes, and it's properly punctuated and the print is the right way up on the page too.

Poor Nigella Lawson singled out her poor husband John Diamond's cancer memoir, *C*, in the *Guardian*. "But I don't name it for the obvious, personal reasons alone," she insisted. In the *Observer*, Jonathan Freedland creepily chose *51st State* by Peter Preston, the man who gave him a job at the *Grauniad*, and another novel, *Day of Atonement*, by his old colleague and pal Jay Rayner. Writing in the *Observer* too, oddly enough, *Times* literary editor Erica Wagner confessed that it was "hard not to choose Ted Hughes's *Birthday Letters*". Hard for her, anyway: not only did Wagner cheerlead the great *Times* puffing and serialisation of the book but she has since been commissioned by Faber to write an official commentary on *Birthday Letters*, in which Hughes explains why two of his lovers chose to gas themselves.

Equally dutiful was Lady Selina Hastings, who selected Lady Violet Powell's ropey memoir *The Departure Platform* ("a great treasure") in the *Sunday Telegraph* — an inspired choice, since Hastings has been lined up to do Anthony Powell's biography next and will need milady Violet's cooperation.

Not even having published a book is no longer any bar to sucking up. "How I would love to be recommending Mary Killen's wonderful first novel in this slot," Andrew Barrow sighed in the *Spectator*. "Alas, this impatiently awaited book is still unwritten or stuck at Chapter Three. I can only hope for better news this year." Perhaps he meant next year: at the *Spectator* they think it's low-class to edit their contributors' copy.

And so to Petronella Wyatt of the *Spectator*, whose Christmas treat was Arthur Golden's mucky novel *Memoirs of a Geisha*: "Our young geisha, born into poverty, defeats her rivals to become one of the most sought after practitioners of her profession, all the while harbouring a passion for a man who is apparently indifferent. Golden treats his subject with courteous respect — understandable, as geishas were never prostitutes... They were well-educated and versed in the arts of singing, dancing and conversation." And writing drivel in the *Spectator*. No wonder Petsy's editor, Frank Johnson, has been driven to marriage at last.

Finally, a couple of special awards for showing-off beyond the call of duty. Most poncily recondite title: *A Field Guide to Zambian Birds Not Found in Southern Africa*, published by the Zambian Ornithological Society and pronounced by Simon Barnes in the *Spectator* to be "essential". Most improbable commendation: Ruth Padel's eulogy to Jo Shapcott's poems, *My Life Asleep*, in the *Independent*. "Shapcott's `roses', an erotic bunch of lyrically strong-minded vaginas, talk back to men." Do they indeed? You have to pay good money to see that sort of thing in Bangkok, you know.

Books & Bookmen

■ STAFF at Penguin Books are confused by the company's schizophrenic attitude to spending money.

Earlier this year the sales conference was extravagantly held in Malaga. Next year's beano, it was announced, will be held in Cyprus. Meanwhile at the company's Kensington offices several in-house redundancies have been announced; and in a gloomy cost-cutting exercise the Ladybird office in Loughborough is to close, its pared-down staff relocating to Penguin HQ.

Bridget Jones's Dowry

■ CRIES of *Bah! Humbug!* were heard from Scottish authors represented by the literary agency Curtis Brown north of the border.

Last year Curtis Brown employees went on a Christmas jolly to Paris, but not a single author was invited. This year the authors were excited to receive a festive invitation from CB's Scottish clan chief Giles Gordon. But the glee was shortlived. The venue turned out to be a local Edinburgh pizza parlour, a long way from the glamour of a day out in Paris, and the invite made clear that each scribe must pay for himself or herself.

CHRISTMAS TURKEYS

Blast from the Past by Ben Elton (Bantam Press): not the huge seller Transworld had hoped for.

Linda McCartney on Tour (Little, Brown): despite her canonisation, this did not sell.

My Autobiography by Will Carling (Hodder): he proved that there *is* such a thing as bad publicity.

Two Fat Ladies Go Round Again (Ebury): once too often, it seems.

Gates of Eden by Ethan Coen (Doubleday): six-figure advance; not sighted anywhere near the bestseller lists.

The Second Angel by Philip Kerr (Orion): Hollywood buys his books... er, but readers don't.

The Right Man by Nigel Planer (Hutchinson): almost every comic actor's novel had been a bestseller... until this one.

Dempster's People by Nigel Dempster (HarperCollins). 'Nuff said.

The Course of My Life by Sir Edward Heath (Hodder): £300,000 advance; only one appearance in the bestseller list.

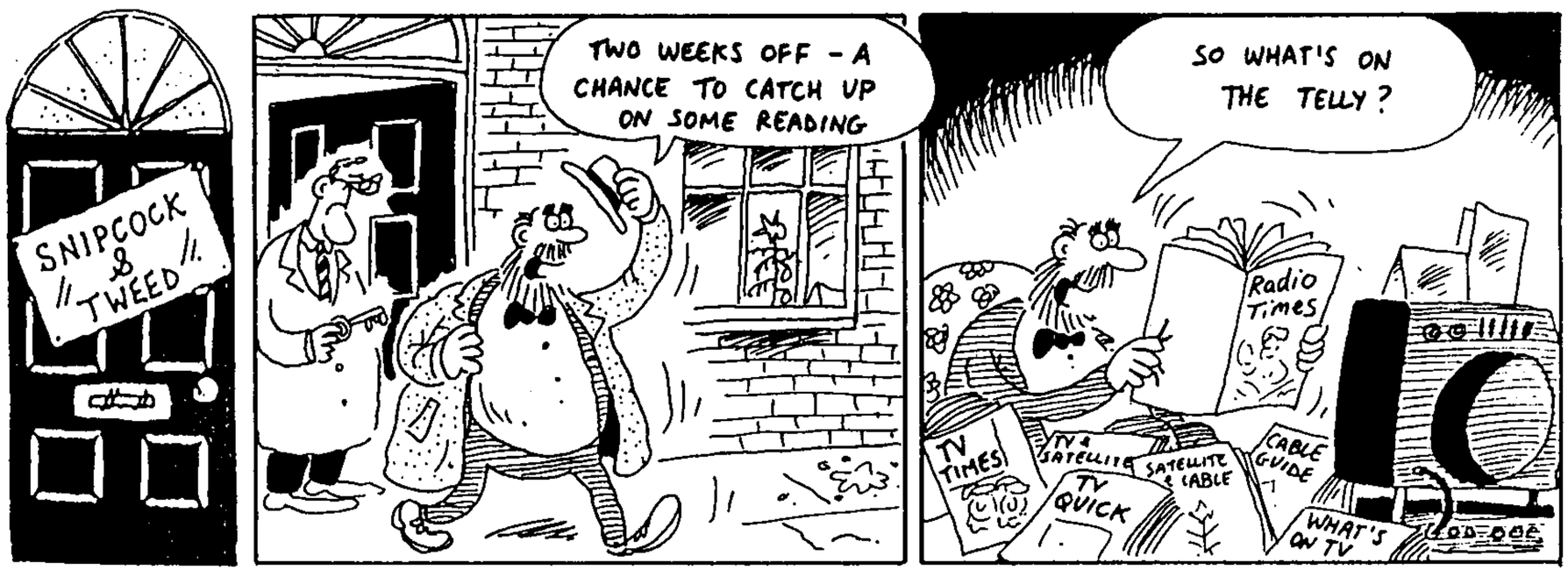
Vinnie: The Autobiography by Vinnie Jones (Headline): perhaps Vinnie's is not so well loved after all.

Thrust by Richard Noble (Partridge / Transworld): this one lacked oomph.

Lily Savage: A Sort of A-Z Thing (Headline): this year's Christmas comedy flop, following *Mrs Merton* last year.

Prince Charles: Breaking the Cycle by James Morton (Ebury): typical Charles — his efforts to promote his serious work get scuppered again, this time by the publicity for Penny Junor's book.

'Bookworm'



footnotes

PINOCHET'S SPANISH PRACTICES

ONE of the central arguments advanced by the friends of General Pinochet for not extraditing him to Spain is that his crimes were committed in Chile, not Spain. But American FBI documents which have been on public record since 1981 reveal that Pinochet planned some of his terrorist crimes in, er, Spain.

The documents were discovered by the FBI while investigating the 1976 assassination in Washington of Orlando Letelier, former Chilean ambassador to the United States and influential enemy of Pinochet's 1973 coup.

The letters were written by Michael Vernon Townley, an American agent of Pinochet's secret "intelligence service", the DINA, to Gustavo Etchepare, his DINA contact in Chile. The letters, which were written between April and September 1979, referred many times to a visit by Pinochet to Spain in November 1975, soon after the death of Pinochet's hero, Generalissimo Franco, who was the fascist dictator of Spain for 36 years.

Franco's regime was a haven for large numbers of terrorists from former fascist countries which had turned to democracy since the defeat of Hitler. The main exporter of such terrorists was Italy. A large group of fascist terrorists enjoyed special privileges under Franco while they engaged in assassinations and dirty tricks against the dictator's enemies all over the world, especially in South America. Pinochet made full use of this network while Franco was alive, and when Franco died Pinochet travelled personally to Spain to direct future operations of "the Italians".

In a letter on 26 April 1979 Townley wrote about a man he called ALFA whom the FBI identified as a ruthless Italian fascist terrorist called Stefano Delle Chiale: "There were meetings between his Excellency (Pinochet) and the Italians in Spain after Franco died. Also, the Italians carried out numerous acts of military espionage against the Peruvians and Argentines not only in Europe, but also in Peru and Argentina."

On 23 August Townley wrote: "I haven't spoken about the Italians. I have no idea where they are nor do I care to know! ALFA got mixed up with various people to do business in Argentina. Some of them had very bad backgrounds whom Argentina law enforcement agencies are seeking... The problem with the Italians is serious... For your information, Pinochet had a meeting with ALFA in Spain some time back. ALFA can be much more embarrassing for the government in the long run than perhaps the Cubans" (a reference to Cuban terrorists also in touch with the Pinochet government).

In other letters Townley set out some of the atrocities likely to have been committed by the Italian terrorists. For instance:

- Retired Chilean army general Carlos Prats and his wife Carmen were assassinated in Buenos Aires in September 1974 when a bomb went off under their car. The general had been highly critical of the Pinochet coup and was completing a book on the subject.
- Former Chilean vice-president Bernardo Leighton and his wife Anita were shot several times, though not killed, as they walked to their home in Rome in June 1975. Leighton was a prominent member of the Chilean Christian Democrat party and was an outspoken critic of the Pinochet regime.

The point which interests the Spanish courts is not just that these and other atrocities were carried out on the orders of General Pinochet, nor even that they were planned at secret meetings between the general and the terrorists responsible, but that the conspiracies were hatched in Spain.

ITV Network Self Centre

"ANDERSON Country" is the nickname given by satirical telly hacks to the state of current affairs in commercial television. The name derives from the growing influence of the Anderson brothers, Steve and Jeff.

Steve, a former editor of *Watchdog,* is programme director and chief current affairs commissioner at the all-powerful ITV network centre.

Since he took over, Yorkshire TV's current affairs programme *3D* has been replaced with a replica of *Watchdog*. The axing of *3D* followed closely on the demise of Carlton TV's *Big Story*. Now down comes the curtain on the most prestigious of all commercial TV's weekly current affairs programmes, Granada's *World in Action* (editor: Steve Anderson's brother, Jeff). The last weekly *World in Action* was on 7 December, and no one knows what is to become of the title.

What will replace all these junked programmes? ITV is proud to announce a new hour-long weekly magazine current affairs programme provisionally called *Sixty Minutes* after the American CBS show of that name. ITV sent out tenders for the huge £10m contract earlier in the year. There were six

THE BROTHERS CHARISMATIC: Steve Anderson (left), and Jeff

bidders. Lord Hollick's United Media put up a team fronted by George Carey and John Willis. STV, Carlton and Yorkshire both put in bids, as did an independent company 20/20. All these teams had a powerful case, but none of them included a reference from a controversial tycoon who might become a subject for investigation or for that matter a single relative of any influential person at the ITV network centre.

Granada's bid could claim both. It boasted a gushing puff from Richard Branson whose Virgin trains are such a success in Granadaland. And the bid was written by Jeff Anderson of *World in Action*. The bids were judged by a panel of three top ITV men: Richard Eyre, chief executive; David Liddiment, director of programmes; and, er, Steve Anderson, brother of Jeff.

Might there have been a hint of a possible conflict of interest here? The *Eye* got answers to that question as follows:

From the ITV network centre: "It was a strong field, but the Granada bid was adjudged to be the best by all three members of the panel. Television's a small industry. There's an awful lot of brothers and sisters and fathers and daughters and sons and things working in it." Yes, but should Steve Anderson have stepped down from the panel which assessed his brother's bid? "Well, Steve is the commissioner for news and current affairs and it would have looked very odd if he hadn't been on the panel."

From Granada: "Jeff Anderson is an excellent inquiring journalist. We knew that having him on the bid could be perceived as a conflict of interest — and reckoned it would make our life a bit harder. I think we felt that Jeff was exactly the right person to do this. The fact that his brother has become a senior person in ITV should not stand between him and the opportunity of a lifetime."

The contract — the opportunity of a lifetime — went to Granada.

SKYCHEF PASS THE SACK BAG

IF YOU want to understand the government's new Fairness at Work proposals you should go to Heathrow airport and talk to the workers at LSG Skychef, the biggest airline catering company in the world.

The company provides packaged food for some of the world's biggest and richest airlines and is owned by a consortium which includes Lufthansa, Kuwaiti Airlines and Gulf Air.

For many months the Skychef workers' union, the T&GWU, has been locked in negotiations over employers' demands for "more flexibility" (working very much harder for slightly more money). The negotiations weren't getting anywhere, so the union went through the long and laborious preparations for a series of four one-day strikes. They held a ballot — 210 voted yes, 74 voted no. They gave the necessary seven-day notice and called an official strike for one day on 20 November.

All the workers responded. Before the day was out, they were all sacked by letters delivered to their homes by courier.

Some of them were told they could go back to work at once if they signed a statement accepting without question every single one of the management's proposals. Others, who happened to be shop stewards or union activists, were told that even if they signed the statement they couldn't go back to work until February. Their punishment for daring to defy the management for one day was to be two months' unemployment. The union's instant offer of serious negotiations if the workers were reinstated on the old terms was crudely rebuffed. The plant has been on strike ever since.

Under existing law an employer is perfectly entitled to sack anyone who goes on strike, even if all the legal requirements for the strike have been fulfilled. The new Fairness at Work proposals promise to remove this immunity — too late for the workers at Skychef.

TRAGEDY AT SUNDERLAND: The chaotic scene after the fatal bus crash

DENNIS THE MENACE?

WHEN the transport firm Stagecoach heard that two young women had been killed by one of their buses, they suspended the 63-year-old bus driver, who has 25 years' experience.

The driver has not been named, but in the words of one of his colleagues he has been "been hung out to dry".

Janine Harrison, 18, Nicola Anderson, 26, and Nicola's two-year-old daughter Charlotte were sitting on a bench in Sunderland bus station when a Dennis Dart bus suddenly surged forward with tremendous speed dragging the two women under its wheels all the way to the gates of the bus station. They died instantly, and the toddler is still badly injured in hospital.

Stagecoach's action against the driver has infuriated bus workers — especially those who have driven any of the 6,000 Dennis Darts operating throughout the country. Many of the drivers have direct or indirect experience of freakish "power surges" by the buses, especially when moving off.

The problem came to a head in 1992. In three garages in Middlesex (Fulwell, Hounslow and Alperton) 13 cases of alleged "power surges" in Dennis Darts were recorded, six of which resulted in collisions. Graham Stephenson, of the Transport and General Workers' Union, wrote to the manufacturers, Dennis of Guildford, with a long list of complaints.

The company commissioned an inquiry by an independent consultant. Bob Bryson, the company's engineering director, wrote to assure the union that "under no circumstances has any defect with any vehicle been found". The only explanation for the surges, he wrote, was that "the driver concerned pressed the accelerator pedal in the belief that he was pressing the brake".

There were two difficulties with this explanation. First, almost all the drivers who complained insisted that they had their feet on the brake at the time of, or just after, the surge. In one case where a woman was being trained as a driver, her training instructor verified that she had her foot firmly on the brake but could not stop the bus jumping forward.

Secondly, all the accidents occurred when the buses were moving off, many of them in bus stations where the speed limit is 4mph. At such slow speeds a sudden surge caused by jamming a foot on the accelerator can easily be rectified by switching to the brake. All the drivers insisted that they had slammed their feet on the brakes and in many cases pulled up the hand brakes as well — but the buses had plunged on.

Dennis Dart surges continued. On 8 November 1996 Ali Akbar, a driver with 20 years' experience, was moving off from High Wycombe bus station when his bus shot forward and smashed into a wall. No one was hurt, but Ali Akbar was prosecuted for dangerous driving. If he had been found guilty, he would have been sacked in disgrace.

His trial, which started at Aylesbury crown court last 7 April, lasted two and half days. The union produced evidence of 17 similar surges of Dennis Darts, many of them in or around bus stations. Another local bus driver, Gordon Daly, gave evidence of another very similar recent surge at Oxford railway station. The jury was out for 20 minutes before unanimously declaring Mr Akbar not guilty.

Mr Bryson, of Dennis, says he cannot comment on the Sunderland tragedy which is being investigated. He says his company has not commissioned an independent investigation into alleged power surges since 1992, but still believes that most of the accidents are caused by drivers stepping on the wrong pedals. "This is," he says, "not an unheard-of phenomenon in automatic vehicles." Much of the evidence will come out at the inquest into the Sunderland deaths — but too late to save Janine Harrison or Nicola Anderson.

High Principals

IT'S THAT BURKE AGAIN

STAFF at Hendon College, north London, were not overjoyed at the news that college principal Jenny Hoyland and other senior managers have been granted private health cover at the expense of the college.

Some other colleges provide such schemes for the principal and finance director, but Hendon has gone in for the perk in a much grander scale. Hoyland herself, her finance director Andrew Whittaker and three other members of the senior management team are expensively covered for private health care.

The *Eye* asked how a publicly-funded college could justify such schemes. Mrs Hoyland replied: "The decision was taken in the light of the college's vulnerability should key functions not be carried out because the staff concerned was unavailable."

The private company which has won the contract to provide the health insurance is Burke Ford Healthcare, part of the Burke Ford Reed group of companies.

Eye readers may recall the name from the series of articles last year about the former chief executive of the Association of Colleges, Roger Ward. Ward resigned abruptly after the *Eye* and the *Times Educational Supplement* published documents about a monthly £600 payment Ward received from Burke Ford Reed, whose health care proposals Ward warmly recommended to all colleges.

Asked by the *Eye* if she knew about this background, principal Hoyland of Hendon College replied: "The Corporation was aware of untested allegations relating the Burke Ford Group of Companies and Mr Ward. The Private Patient/Burke Ford healthcare scheme was selected as most suitable to the college's requirements in comparison with a number of other schemes with good business practice."

The Burke Ford healthcare scheme is recommended by the college to all its staff, but there is an important condition attached. For the Big Five, the scheme is free. The rest of the staff have to pay for it.

The Hunting of the Nark 2

IT APPEARS no one on the staff of ITV's weekly hour-long "coppers' corner" — *Nation's Most Wanted* — reads the *Eye* or the *Guardian*.

The programme on 27 November carried a long appeal to help police in their hunt for Paul Dawes. Det Inspector Dave Churchill from the West Midlands fraud squad said Dawes was wanted for two massive car frauds in Britain and Holland.

Former detective superintendent John Jones described Dawes as an extremely sophisticated operator whom the police badly wanted to interview. He should be easy to spot, said Jones, since he is 28 stone and six feet four inches tall and "the chances are that he is back in the UK".

Mr Jones ended by surmising that the fraudster "might be watching this programme — if so why doesn't he give us a call?" Ho! Ho! Very satirical. There would however be nothing odd about a call from Paul Dawes to the West Midlands police. For he has rung them often enough in the past in his capacity as police informer.

Under the heading THE HUNTING OF THE NARK, the *Eye* of 18 September (959) revealed Dawes's role in the entrapment of former prison officer Jogen Rajcoomar in a drugs deal in which all the other participants were undercover police officers or police informers. This story was later told in the *Guardian*. Sadly, the irony that police are now hunting for their own informer was lost on viewers of *Nation Most Wanted*. They didn't know because they weren't told.

SWEET JUSTICE

P&O is not the only great corporate champion of the market economy to be fined by the European commission for bucking the market (see last *Eye*).

Tate & Lyle, whose robust campaigning for free enterprise goes back 50 years to the Mr Cube campaign against nationalisation, has been fined £8m for price-fixing in a sugar cartel. The fine is bad news for the Tory party which has a peer (Lord Walker) and a peer's wife (Lady Prior) on the board, but even worse for the Labour government which has handed Tate & Lyle the management of impoverished schools in Newham, east London.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE reluctance of the world's bankers and major investors to hand over $2bn to Formula One's little big man Bernie Ecclestone is no surprise. Consider the facts as set out in the 100-page prospectus for the loan notes to be issued by Formula 1 Finance BV.

Investors are asked to put up a minimum $500,000 for five to 22 years to a Dutch company controlled by a Dutch foundation, Stichting Formula 1 Finance, controlled by unidentified individuals — although we can make a very good guess.

The Dutch company then lends the whole $2bn to a UK company, Formula One Administration, controlled via another UK company, Formula One Holdings, by a Jersey company SLEC Holdings, which in turn is controlled by a trust run for "certain individuals". These are not unrelated to Bernie's wife Slavica and their children.

Along the way,Slavica Ecclestone, aka SLEC, will also, if the bond issue goes through, collect a tax-free present of undisclosed multi-millions through part of the $2bn being used to acquire her company Petara which effectively owns the Formula One monopoly through its subsidiaries Formula One Management and Formula One Travel. FOM took over control of the global Grand Prix business in January 1997 from Bernie Ecclestone's company Formula One Promotions and Administration.

And all that is before you get to such major risk factors as the European commission investigation, the loss of tobacco advertising, the need to renegotiate most of the vital TV contracts and the fact that Ecclestone is 68.

No man in the history of business has probably done as much for his family as Bernie Ecclestone. But then, as pointed out in *Eye* 961, Slavica has many attractions, not the least of which is that, as a Croatian, she is almost certainly not domiciled in the UK for capital gains tax purposes. That means that Ecclestone could probably transfer the Formula One business, worth more than £1bn, to her offshore trust tax free and any future sales it makes of that business would also be tax free. Transfers between husband and wife are usually tax free. Transfers as part of a business reorganisation in preparation for a flotation can also be tax free. So, once the Formula One business was controlled from Jersey via SLEC, the Ecclestone fortune was legally safe from tax.

SLEC intends to sell off shares in Formula One Holdings as early as possible, maybe in 2001. Any such share sale would be most unlikely to attract UK capital gains tax. Another good reason for the Labour party to be thankful it gave Bernie back his £1m donation.

Petara was set up in Jersey in 1994. It was initially owned entirely by Slavica Ecclestone, but control then passed to a Swiss company. It is UK resident, but run by a St Helier-based trust company. For the year to December 1996 — before it effectively took over Formula One racing — Petara had a dividend income of just £500,000.

Slavica Ecclestone also controls another Jersey company which does not feature in the Formula 1 Finance prospectus — Microner Investments. This had a dividend income of £312,000 for 1996.

Part of the $2bn lent to Formula One Administration will go to pre-pay a loan note to SLEC as the initial consideration for Petara. The balance will be paid on demand at an unspecified future date. How much SLEC will be paid for Petara is based on a "fair value" of the Formula One business it controls.

This can be expected to be a tidy tax-free sum, as Formula One Management made £81m before tax in the eight months to August 1998 on a turnover of £173m. For the year to December 1997 these figures were £80m and £219m.

Formula 1 Finance projects that the Ecclestone monopoly will generate revenues rising from $314m this year to $424m in 2001, but that these will then decline, pending new TV contracts, to $245m in 2003 when it would like to repay all the loan notes.

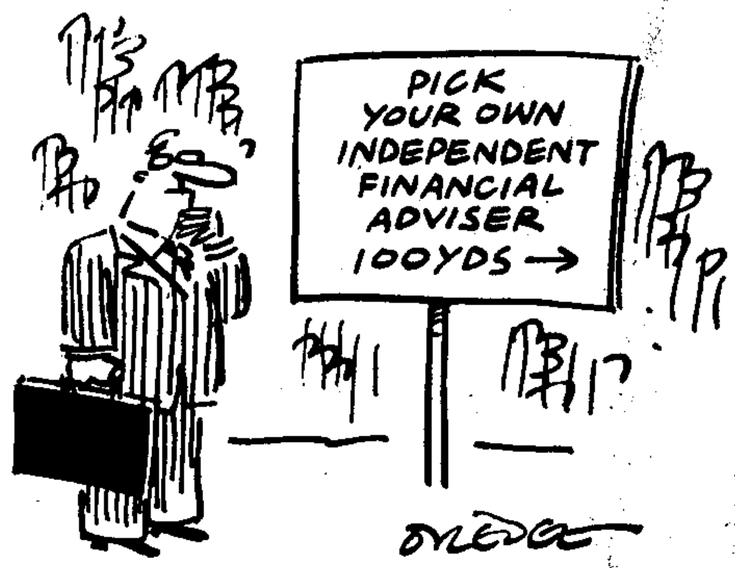
Just how important are the TV contracts threatened by the European commission investigation is revealed by the fact that while this year $227m came from 62 television contracts in 2003 $181m will be coming from just six contracts. These contracts contributed $211m in 1997 out of gross revenues of $313m — three quarters from Europe.

Another fascinating financial fact is that in 1998 while $110m went to the 11 Formula One racing teams as their share of the TV revenues, $100m went to unidentified third parties, including Bernie's friends at Formula One's governing body, the FIA. In the 100-page prospectus, in keeping with Ecclestone's reputation, there are precious few insights into who gets what and how from the global Formula One circus. Ecclestone's secrecy about the TV contracts and those with Grand Prix promoters are said to have been one reason last year's £1bn-plus flotation of Formula One Holdings never got off the starting grid.

Another could be the risk factors listed in the prospectus which may prove fatal to the bond issue. Formula 1 Finance depends on Bernie keeping and extending all those contracts. It is entirely dependent on him and admits it will have no way of independently verifying that he is complying with agreements. Furthermore, it will be "heavily dependent" on a small number of pay TV contracts when pay TV has still to score big in Europe and in other key markets. The pay TV contracts all expire by 2006. Ecclestone also admits that 40 percent of all Formula One sponsorship comes from tobacco companies. This will have to be replaced in Europe by 2006.

Finally there are the possible breaches of the EC competition law which have yet to be ruled on by Brussels. Like tobacco advertising Bernie Ecclestone is optimistic that the worst will not happen. But what if it does? Meanwhile, Bernie and Slavica have already had an unwelcome seasonal surprise. The Belgian taxman is on their case claiming more than $200m in back taxes and fines from running the Belgian Grand Prix in 1993 and subsequent years. Hardly a good omen.

'Slicker'



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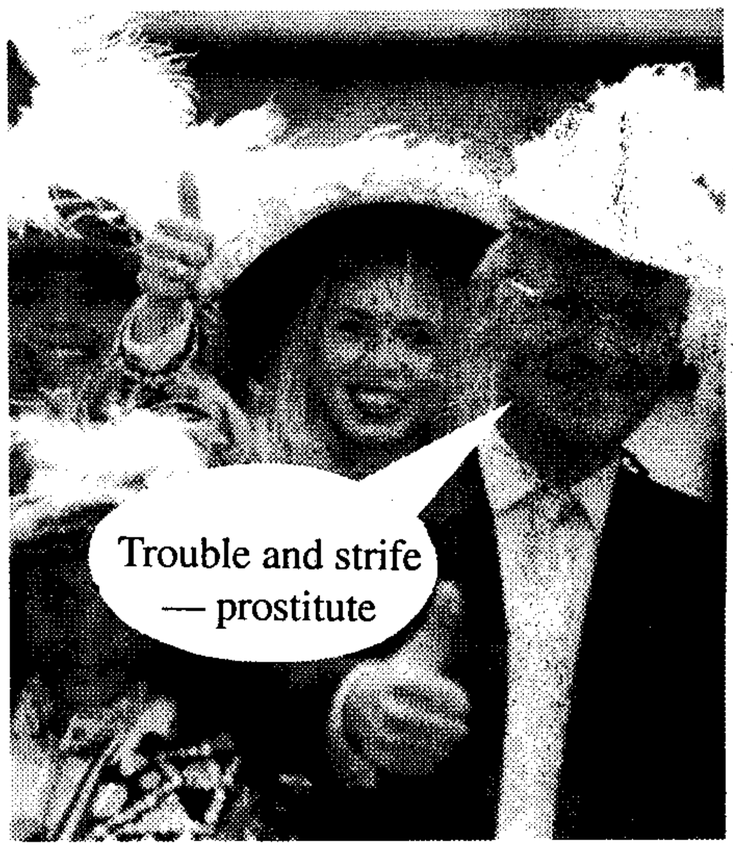

Celeb

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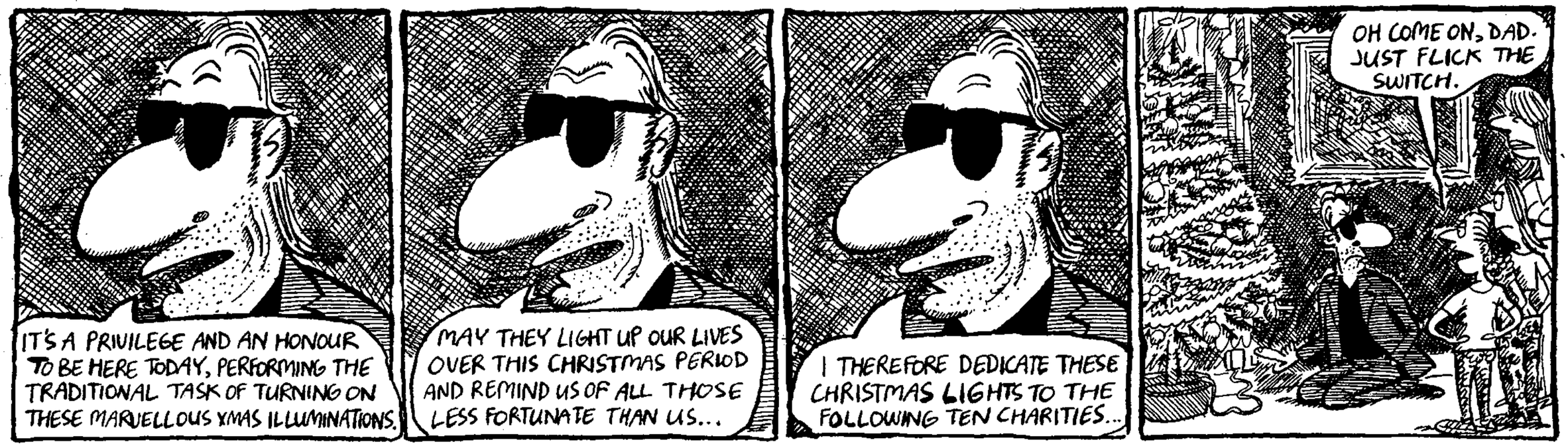
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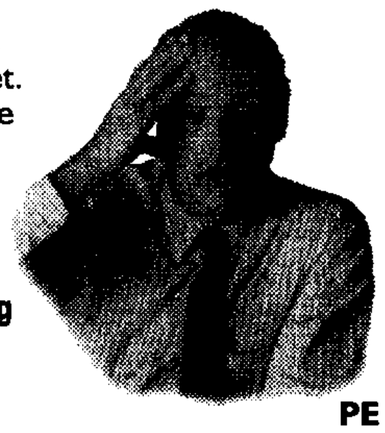

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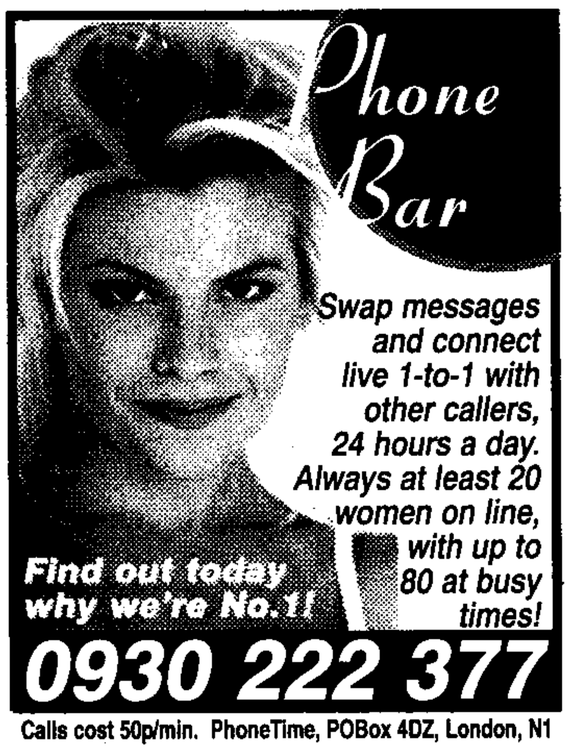
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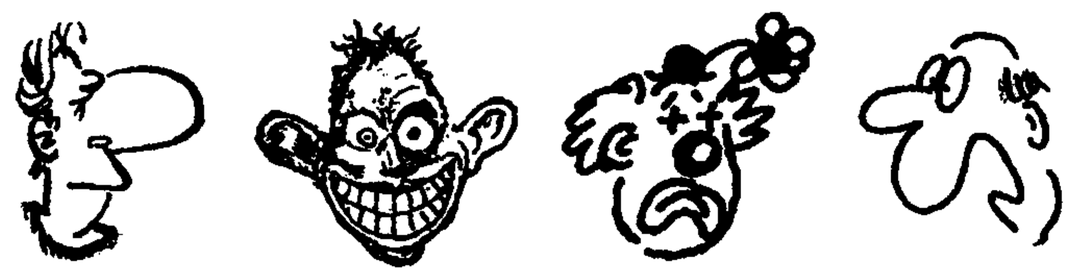

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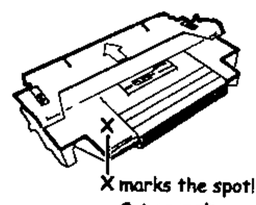

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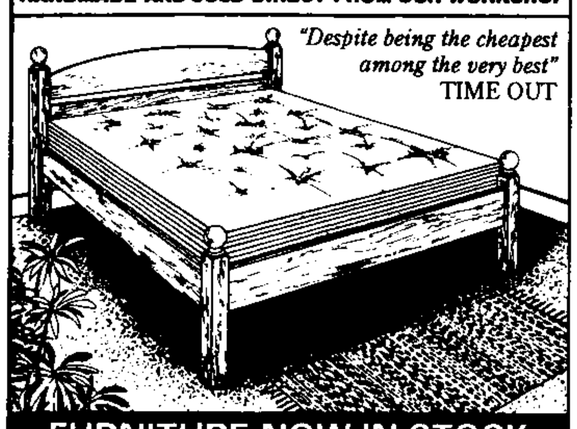
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TALENTED GRADE 6 child musician desperately needs decent flute. Single parent can't afford. Nat West 56-00-63 42204232.

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would be monumentally grateful
to anyone who would help him
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(£1900)
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Lloyds 30-92-89, 0667375.

20 MONTHS, already fugged by NHS. £120 weekly needed; physiotherapy for Cerebral Palsy. Help me stand on my own two feet. Box 0566.

POST RECENT REDUNDANCY – single parent facing financial ruin. Any donation much appreciated. Box 0766.

DUMPED, DESPERATE, dependants – require £7000. Grateful. Anything. LLOYDS 30-91-59, 0215683.

DIS. EX-SERVICE, 80, fought six years for you @ 2/- per 24 hrs. Savings almost gone. LLOYDS 30-13-64, 0074865.

POLICE INFORMANT (non-criminal) and family require funds to urgently relocate following death threats and intimidation., having been precluded from entry into a witness protection scheme. My husband is not a criminal, he was a private investigator. Whilst participating in major police undercover operations the evidence he obtained was directly responsible for having paedophiles nad persons intent on murder imprisoned. We now live in absolute fear of our lives. The Home Secretary wrote to my husband stating 'Your concern for your safety is understandable, given the nature of the information which you passed to the police' but added that ministers cannot intervene if individuals who are threatened are not give police protection. I will reply to everybody who pledges to assist us financially or who can offer any other form of aid. Further details available upon request. Box 0866.

SINGLE MOTHER, always worked, paid own way, kids now flown, trying to make their way, can't clear upbringing debts. Desperate £2000. RBS 16-32-10, 10062951.

EPILEPTIC – LOST JOB. Please help with £8,000.00. TSB 77-71-71, 38974660.

CHRONIC DYSLEXIC 7 years. Failing and unhappy in state system. Desperately needs to attend specialist school. Fees £8000 / year. Please help us give her the chance to reach her potential. Thank you. Lloyds 30-94-63 Acc. No. 7160248 or Box 3765.

SEEKING REDRESS against ingenious con-man; could bankrupt him, but that would not get back the money. Reward for good ideas. Details: Write Box 1066.

HEAT OR EAT – annual dilemma for arthritis sufferer. Deeply grateful for help to be warm. MIDLAND 40-08-25, 61003658.

DESPERATE, DEPRESSED, please help. Grateful thanks. HALIFAX: 11-08-70, 00229666. Box 1166

COMPLETELY DESPERATE, sick with worry, help me please – a good mum with debts, £2,800 truly needed to save family from disaster. I beseech you to help. ABBEY NATIONAL 09-01-26 - 08488533.

HELP! NEED £2000 to complete degree. MB 40-27-16, 91291750.

MOTHER, alone and frightened. £3000 saves us from eviction. Grateful thanks for anything. BARCLAYS: 20-74-05, 08923818.

PLEASE HELP FAMILY £500 to save home. 309546 3201341.

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REDUNDANCY – dependent family to keep. £25,000 needed to start new business. ANY amount welcome. Thankyou. NATIONWIDE 07-00-30, 91663132.

THIRD WORLD CHARITY volunteer desperately needs funding to continue work. HALIFAX, 11-03-97, 00501795.

GRANDMOTHER, OAP, NHS write-off. Serious heart/joint problems, each inoperable because of other – would love electric bed/wheelchair/armchair. Winter warmth. THANK YOU. TSB 77-17-12, 08499868.

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EYE LOVE

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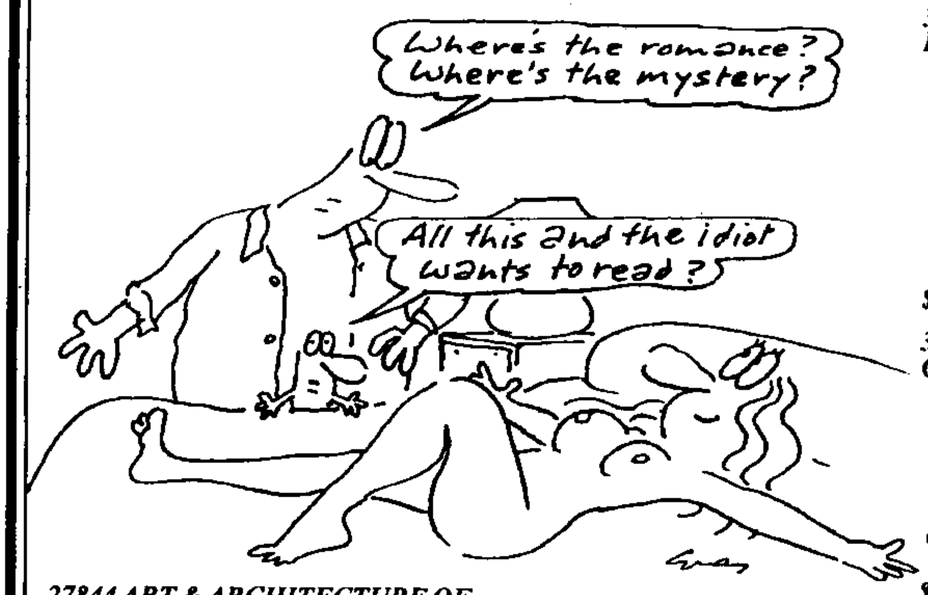

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